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DECEMBER 1927

# Mystery STORIES

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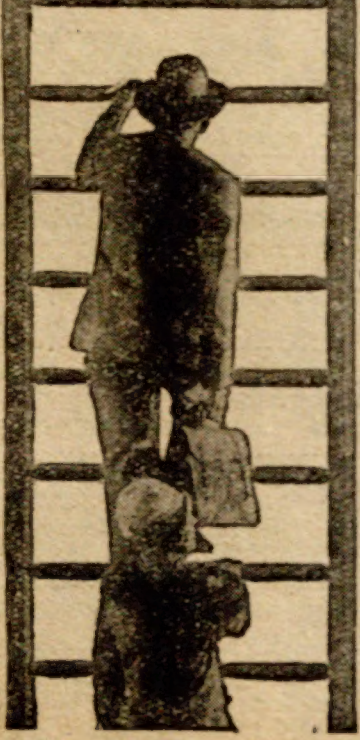

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*Again in This Issue*

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NEXT month's issue—that for January—will start off with a long, complete novelette by Dashiell Hammett. It's a cleverly plotted yarn, and its action reminds us of what the brakeman told the old lady when she asked if a certain train stopped at that station. "No, mum," said he; "it doesn't even hesitate."

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Sir Arthur Conan Doyle tells us some more interesting things about Houdini. How did that master magician do his astounding and unexplainable tricks? Was it with the aid of real magic, and not just that of the stage?

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Also, give some thought to our other department, THE MOST MYSTERIOUS HAPPENING OF MY LIFE. If you have had anything really mysterious happen to you, tell us about it.

You will find the January issue of MYSTERY STORIES very satisfying

THE EDITOR.

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Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of MYSTERY STORIES, published monthly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1927—State of Massachusetts, County of Suffolk, ss.—Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared Chester H. Smith, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Assistant to the President of the PRISCILLA COMPANY, publishers of MYSTERY STORIES, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit:

1. That the name and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business manager are: Publisher—The Priscilla Company, 470 Atlantic Avenue, Boston, Mass. Editor—Clinton A. Faudre, 52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York City. Managing Editor—None. Business Manager—Henry W. Newhall, President, 470 Atlantic Avenue, Boston, Mass.

2. That the owners are: The Priscilla Company, Est. W. N. Hartshorn, Arthur J. Crockett, Henry W. Newhall, Lida P. Newhall, Alice C. Crockett, Charles B. Marble, Earle R. Macausland, Fred. J. McLaughlin, Chester H. Smith, Oakley R. Jones, Myron C. Gates, George H. Hands—all of 470 Atlantic Avenue, Boston, Mass.

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C. H. SMITH.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 21st day of September, 1927. Myron C. Gates. (My commission expires Sept. 30, 1928.)

*He picked up the sheet he had discarded.*

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## CHAPTER I

### A BLIZZARD BATTLE

THE wind was northwest, and its fury was such that Granville Baring, heading into it toward Fifth Avenue, with collar up and head down, felt as if the pellets and splinters of snow whistling by his unprotected ears were sharp particles of glass.

Nor was the malice of the wind confined to this merely annoying assault. It probed unceasingly, with icy lances, every opening in his clothing, and even blew its chilling breath straight through the tight-woven cloth of his coat in its resolute efforts to numb. And at the same time, with gusts and cunning spirals, it heaped high drifts here and there to ensnare legs already weakened by its freezing tactics.

"This is a blizzard!" Baring muttered, as an insidious, upward blast threatened to send his hat whisking eastward.

But the wind defeated itself. So biting an air in the lungs could not fail to be bracing, and Baring marched against the gale with a glow of energy gradually warming him. His feet tramped down or ploughed through the smooth white barriers with an ease that was an insult to the striving storm. Nevertheless, he was conscious of an underlying feeling of relief that his objective, the warm interior of a taxi or bus, was no further away than the golden lights of the Avenue.

But he was not destined to go that far, for as he pushed along he suddenly became aware that forces other than the blizzard were in conflict ahead. He looked up.

NOT a score of feet in front of him he saw a tall, heavy figure go reeling backward, clawing at the air, and suddenly collapse into a drift. The power that had sent him there came from the bare, clenched fist of a shorter man who stood, momentarily at bay, against a brown-stone wall. Plunging toward him from Fifth Avenue came two other men, black against the snow. Before the dealer of the mighty blow could recover his balance one of the twain was upon him.

Granville Baring charged forward with a shout. The lone fighter locked arms with the man who had thrust at him. Baring found himself face to face with the other of the twain.

"Keep outa this, you!" the fellow growled, and extended a ready hand in a straight, rigid push at Baring's chest. Baring staggered, hesitated, for he had formulated no line of action beyond this impulsive rush. But he was suddenly energized again. Immediately upon delivery of his shove the other man turned contemptuously from him toward the two wrestlers, and from somewhere on his person he produced a short, flexible blackjack.

He raised it, but before he could bring it down on the head of the solitary combatant Baring had returned the blow. His gloved fist thudded on the side of the fellow's jaw, but did not fell him. It did, however, divert him from his purpose, and he whirled upon Baring once more with a snarl. Baring, his feet shifting warily on the snow, awaited action—but the next move came from another source.

The little man to whose aid Baring had come emerged most unexpectedly from the grasp of the other, caught at Baring's hand, and half turned him from his adversary.

"Run! Pistol!" he gasped, and literally dived upon the man in the snowdrift, who had gotten to his knees and was bringing a glinting automatic into play.

The advice seemed good to Baring. Blackjacks and pistols, with three stout ruffians behind them, were no fair odds for two unarmed men on a slippery, snow-clogged sidewalk. He started, but paused when he saw that his ally's dive had failed to overbalance the kneeling man with the gun. Leaping forward, he kicked heartily at the hand that held the automatic. His toes ached with sudden pain, and he saw the weapon fly into the street. The little man floundered to his feet.

"Run!" he exhorted, and together Baring and he, taking to the middle of the street, sped down the wind away from Fifth Avenue. They jumped the drifts as best they could and made swift progress on the spots swept bare. The man beside Baring ran with short, jerky strides, his knees seemingly unbending.

A SUDDEN roar split the storm, echoing instantly from side to side of the street. Baring's companion leaped suddenly against him, and Baring was carried to the right by the thrust.

"Cover—that car!" ejaculated the short man. Baring caught at his meaning and swerved behind a dark, silent sedan that stood before a door. With the diminishing shelter of this at their backs they ran on, while shot after shot blared out. At the corner the two fugitives turned southward together.

"If we can find a policeman——"

Baring panted, but the little man cut in:

"Run! Cops can't stop bullets. Run!"

It came to Baring that his companion, brave as he had shown himself to be, feared these men more than street thieves need be feared. This was no common assault and robbery that he had stumbled on.

TWO blocks southward they rushed. There were no street cars passing, and the snow-covered tracks showed why. The few pedestrians they encountered stared, offering no obstacle to their progress, or passed by with heads averted, unseeing. Then the little man, to Baring's surprise, turned toward Fifth Avenue again, instead of cutting eastward toward the refuge of subway or elevated.

"Come on!" he urged, as Baring paused. "They're not likely to think we turned into this wind. Not they! Come!"

It was good reasoning. Baring followed. The gusts fought them hard, and the icy snow stung viciously, but no sound of pistol shot or shout came up-wind behind them. Near the corner the short man, head doubled over, spurted in his strange, stiff-legged gait, and drew twenty feet ahead of Baring.

His frantic wave brought a lurching, thundering bus with steaming radiator to a halt. He waited beside it for a moment, while Baring covered the distance, and then both scrambled aboard and up the winding stairs to the bleak elevation of the covered top.

They sat down, heaving within their overcoats, and the bus, roaring its contempt of the storm, but making slow progress nevertheless, rumbled by the street upon which they had fought, and on, northward.

They looked at each other. Baring saw a brown-haired, gaunt young man with a close-cropped mustache. The stranger's round, horn-rimmed spectacles were three inches below his own eyes as they sat there side by side. Strangely, he was smiling most amiably, as if Baring had just told him a jest instead of having undergone with him a deadly peril.

"We're not out of the cold just yet, but we've come quite a distance," he said with a chuckle that was wholly unaffected. "Perhaps you will permit me to direct our movements for a time?"

Baring hesitated. Certainly he could not part from this peculiar young man without some explanation of this, especially since it was quite apparent that his companion had no intention of alighting near a police station. Besides, his words hinted that danger was not entirely past. And Baring was of the kind who see things through.

"I am at your service," he said quietly.

The other nodded acknowledgment, then stretched his right leg out into the aisle with another ripple of merriment.

"One Hundred and Tenth Street is one of the best places to stalk a taxi I know," he confided cheerfully. "You can bag 'em there even on a night like this."

HIS prophecy proved a true one, for as the bus turned westward they alighted and found themselves almost under the wheels of a cruising cab. Granville Baring's mysterious comrade murmured an address in the ear of the driver, and Baring found himself whizzing southward, retracing the course of the bus to the monotonous music of the skid chains. He said nothing, reflecting that this was a queer situation for

a rather staid young stockbroker to find himself in.

His companion preserved an unembarrassed silence, broken occasionally by that queer, joyous chuckle of his. As they passed the street of their recent struggle both men leaned forward and looked out, past the huge apartment house that reared itself above its neighbors. The spot where that quick, vicious battle had been fought was deserted, and the wind, as well as they could see, had already wiped away the traces they had left in the snow. There was a scattering of people in front of the apartment entrance. The short young man laughed delightedly, and Baring turned to smile at him. He became aware, with something of a shock, that the face of his companion was no longer adorned by a mustache.

His expression was instantly noted.

"Pulled it off just as we left the bus," the wearer of the horn-rimmed spectacles explained, much pleased at Baring's mystified face. He tapped his glasses. "Going to get rid of these when we leave this taxi."

Baring did not answer immediately. "You take extraordinary precautions," he ventured, at last.

"That's an excellent non-committal remark," applauded his companion. "I can answer it at present only by saying, 'I do.'"

THE taxicab turned sharply eastward in the Fifties and stopped before a high-stooped house. The short young man dragged his right leg to the sidewalk, whipped out a wallet, and disposed of the driver. Then he stood motionless, fumbling with the leather case until the cab had turned the corner.

"Now we can go in," he said, and crossed the street and walked a few doors further east.

## CHAPTER II

### THE JEWELED SWORD

THE house at which he paused was identical with that before which the taxicab had discharged its passengers, but the first floor revealed itself by discreet and elegant signs to be a tearoom. Granville Baring followed up the brown-stone steps, and in through a door which needed no urging other than the young man's nimble key. He perceived in the dim electric light of the vestibule that his companion was no longer bespectacled, but he did not know at what particular instant the horn-rimmed glasses had been removed.

"And here we are," said Baring's host, at the end of the third flight of stairs. He flung open the door and revealed a large room with a skylight. Half a dozen canvases were stacked in one corner, and a dais occupied another. A day-bed, an easy chair, a straight chair, an easel, and a kitchen table, with paints, palette, brushes, and various other bits of artistic paraphernalia scattered upon it, were disposed about the remainder of the room. A large, hideous portrait of an imposing woman in black velvet looked down unamiably from the wall.

"I can now speak freely," the young man said briskly as he carefully closed the door behind Baring. "My name is Chardon—Andrew Chardon. Doubtless you already suspect that I am a painter. I am not, but I endeavor here in Number Three, where my name is Ezra Still, to convey that impression. The gratitude I feel toward you I can only express by relieving the pangs of curiosity from which you must be suffering."

He paused, and Baring, thoughtfully digesting this heterogeneous burst of information, was much too busy to reply. His ally's name was Chardon; he was not a painter, although this den of his was an exact reproduction of a thousand artists' studios within five miles of that place; and here in Number Three his name was Ezra Still. Baring sat down.

"Proceed," he requested.

CHARDON chuckled, but remained standing. He threw off the black overcoat which had enveloped him and revealed beneath it formal evening attire.

"All this is no doubt interesting to you, since you are prepared to hear a long story," he said. "But I will be brief, and perhaps disappointing. To come to the point at once, the gentlemen from whose unkindly clutches you so gallantly rescued me are not members of a sinister and secret society whose aim is to exterminate me. In fact, they are associated with one of the most widely advertised organizations in the world—the New York City Police Department."

"What!" exclaimed Baring, and the calm with which he had made ready to hear a strange narrative deserted him. He stood up; he looked searchingly into the countenance of Chardon; but he found there nothing more than an intensification of the delight which had been welling up in this strange young man ever since they had found refuge in the bus.

"I electrify you!" Chardon exclaimed, as if thereby he had gained much merit.

"Why—what——" Baring began confusedly, for he dimly pictured unpleasant consequences.

"They were under the impression that I had stolen a jeweled Indian sword of great antiquity, once owned by an ancient Mongol prince, from among the wedding presents displayed at a reception in that tall and exceedingly expensive apartment house at the corner of Fifth Avenue," Chardon explained, readily enough.

"But why—why, then, did you fight them?" demanded Baring, and a little resentment crept into his voice. Had he laid himself open to a serious charge merely to rescue a fool who could have freed himself with a word?

"Because their impression was a true one," Chardon replied agreeably, and withdrew from the right leg of his black-braid-edged trousers a rather short, scabbarded weapon whose hilt glowed and sparkled with blue, green and red fire, and with the rainbow hues of the diamond. "Beautiful, isn't it? But I can think of many things I should rather have stuck against my leg while dodging bullets in a snowy street."

With a gesture of distaste he thumped the sword down on the paint-smeared table.

"You are a thief!" Baring said, and the utter amazement in his voice overshadowed the accusation in the words.

CHARDON acknowledged the impression he had made upon his friend in need with a smile peculiarly winning and becoming. Then he sat down on the bed soberly enough, crossed his thin legs, and squinted thoughtfully at his accuser.

"That is something I've often wondered about," he said. "Legally I am; morally I am. But actually, am I? The spoils mean nothing to me—I hardly make expenses. I maintain no less than four of these sanctuaries, and the incidentals mount up amazingly. And I get no

particular pleasure out of the actual theft."

For a moment he was silent, brooding; the complete antithesis of the laughing little man of action he had been but a few moments before. He looked up to read a question in Baring's eyes.

"I am one of these unfortunate people who are flashily brilliant," he explained. "I can master the broad principles of any science, any art, any trade, in almost no time. For instance, I thrilled with enthusiasm when I discovered I could paint after a fashion, or that I could master an airplane in about half the time consumed by an ordinary novice. But after I had absorbed the essentials and had been promoted to the study of dull details —Lord! Ennui descended upon me and my brilliancy expired like an electric light when somebody presses a button. I found myself perishing of boredom; I had to move on to the next thing. And finally there seemed to be no next thing, and I starved, until even the pangs of hunger annoyed me. Then I discovered—this."

Chardon stood up and paced the floor with quickening steps.

"Do you know what it is to pit yourself against great odds — to have angry men at your heels—to be heading precipitately toward you know not what?" he asked. "There's a thrill in it that never grows stale. And think what a misstep means! Jail! Horror! The end of all things, the essence of monotony—the thing worse than death. Can't you see why, in this excessively dull world, I am a thief, preying on people who can afford to lose but who take excruciating care that they do not?"

But Baring refused to share the enthusiasm blazing in Chardon's eyes.

"Enough of this," he said shortly. "I am not interested in your symptoms. You are a thief. You admit it. Has it not occurred to you that as an honest man I should turn you over to the police?"

Chardon, his ardor cooling as suddenly as it had risen, sat down on the day-bed again. He took out a tarnished and somewhat battered silver cigarette case, and betrayed no resentment when Baring impatiently waved it aside.

"The very fact that you ask me that question indicates that you have no intention of turning me over to the police," he explained, with a trace of amusement in his voice, and leisurely lit a cigarette. Not until he had sent a puff of smoke writhing through the air did he go on:

"I have studied you carefully. I'm good at snap character-reading, too, you know. You have placed me under a deep obligation to you. Paradoxically enough, you feel that that fact places you under a certain obligation to me. To put it more plainly: since you have rescued me from the hands of the police, you cannot bring yourself to drag me, no matter how guilty, out into the storm to a police station."

BARING was silent, defeated. It was true. The idea of surrendering Chardon to the forces from which he had, even though unknowingly, rescued him, was abhorrent. He was not introspective; he did not know why this was so, but that it was, there was no doubt.

"Do not presume too much," he said bitterly. "I might astonish you."

Chardon laughed gently.

"Moreover, I have bound you even tighter by complete confession," he said. "By bringing you here and placing in your hands all the evidence that the police would

need to convict me, I have insured my safety. Only by attempting to make *you* do something dishonest—to share the proceeds of the sale of that ancient toy, for instance—would I release you. Isn't that so?"

Baring did not answer. He was looking at the sword upon the table. He picked it up and felt its weight, and examined the jewels in the hilt.

"You would be arrested the instant you offered this for sale," he asserted.

"Not I," Chardon declared positively. "I'd pick my market. I saw an old glutton for antiques at the reception who'd give a good price for this and never breathe a question."

"JUST how did you manage to —steal— this thing?" Baring inquired.

Chardon laughed, unabashed at the coldness of the other's tone. He looked up at the smoke above his head as if picturing again the scene.

"It required a little planning," he said. "First, I had to commit a minor burglary—entry into the bachelor apartment of a social young man named Bertram Mintor Lykes, who was certain to have received an invitation to the reception, and just as certain to have left it behind him when he went. That presented no difficulties, but it was an important detail. Evening dress is no longer an open sesame to even large social gatherings. You must present either a familiar face or a card of admission at the door.

"The apartment was a duplex affair. You were carried up to the nineteenth floor, where the gentlemen's coat-room was located. Then, with that wholly illogical uneasiness which comes of leaving your coat and hat to strangers in a strange house, you descended the private stairs to the larger rooms below, where the happy couple, Mr. and Mrs. K. Welling Torne, were acting as targets for the sorry wit of their friends.

"NOW, I had not come to rob them, particularly; but when I saw how handsome, how wealthy, how young, and, above all, how happy they were even during that ordeal, I felt I must. 'Some jealous god will blast them with misfortune if I do not put a slight tartness into the divine nectar they are drinking,' I thought. 'Such unflawed joy is not for mortals.'

"And so I ceased to look over the jewelry the ladies were displaying so obligingly, and strolled over to the alcove where the presents were displayed. They were guarded by two exquisitely clad gentlemen who looked as if strait-jackets would have been a positive relief. They were perspiring excessively, despite the fact that they stood within three feet of the only open window in the apartment. These, I deduced with unerring skill, were detectives.

"One was a tall, sturdy individual, and the other a little, lean chap, rather of my own build. The accursed sword took my fancy, for it presented difficulties. But I must admit that I was not anticipating anything as crude as fists, chases, bullets, and blackjacks.

"This weapon was a present from the bride's uncle, Phelps Burnadine, who makes expensive antiques his hobby. It was given because it was costly, not because it might be useful to a young couple starting housekeeping.

"Of course, the detectives would have objected if I had tucked it under my arm and departed. That was what they were there for. So it was necessary to find a conve-

nient electric lamp cord nearby. While leaning against the wall with an expression of great fatigue on my aristocratic features, and with the cord behind me, I cut through the insulation with a pocket knife, the handle of which I had thoughtfully wrapped in rubber bands to prevent shock. Naturally, the instant my knife short-circuited the wires the fuse popped, and that whole section of the apartment was thrown into darkness.

"I had measured rather accurately my distance from the table and the position of the sword on it. So the time was practically imperceptible before I was plowing through the chattering crowd with the sword down my trouser-leg, murmuring: 'Just a fuse blown out, ladies and gentlemen; it will be fixed in a moment. Pardon me.'

"PEOPLE are going and coming all the time at such affairs, so I felt confident my departure would not attract attention. The gentlemen's coat-room, to which I made my way, was on another fuse, and consequently it was still illumined. Unfortunately, the crush there was so great that the lights were on again on the floor below and the loss discovered before I got my hat and coat. As a matter of precaution, therefore, I lingered a bit longer, and heard the buzz of a sensation among the crowd below.

"When I entered the elevator at the nineteenth floor I was feeling reasonably safe, but to my distinct annoyance it stopped at the eighteenth and took on the taller of the two detectives and also my involuntary host, the bride's father, Jasper Kelton Burnadine.

"The sleuth looked mad, rather frightened, and in a big hurry to warn his brother tecs downstairs. Although I endeavored to limp out of the elevator most convincingly, both men were suspicious of the whole world. I heard them whispering behind me, and then the detective followed, and I could not prevent him, in the outer hall, from bumping inquiringly against my leg. That gave the show away with a bang, of course. I started traveling.

"You know the rest, save that, happily, it was this sleuth who sat down in the snow at the suggestion of my fist."

CHARDON had told his story coolly but with keen enjoyment, as another man might have told of the stalking of a deer. Baring had listened with absorbed attention, and with a certain reluctant interest in, if not actual sympathy with, the under-dog fighting against odds. But now his face betrayed nothing of his feelings.

"Why did you try to fight all three?" he asked, making no effort to conceal his curiosity. "Didn't you know that it was hopeless?"

"That was part of the thrill," Chardon replied with his characteristic chuckle. "How close to jail I was then! But a great, though unknown, philosopher has said: 'You never know your luck.' And in this case he was right, was he not? For here we are with the sword, and with only a memory of the three detectives, instead of a grim reality."

"You will, I regret to say, retain of the sword, also, only a memory," Baring said grimly. He picked up the jeweled weapon with decision. "It is my intention to return this at once to the apartment from which it was taken. You read me aright concerning your own safety, but I shall make restoration without endangering you."

Chardon stared at him, astonished, but Baring was calmly pla-

cing the other man's booty under his long coat and paid no attention.

"My friend, you do not know detectives as I do," Chardon said. "If you go near that place to-night, you will awake in jail to-morrow. You cannot explain to detectives; certainly you cannot explain your part in this night's work to them. They do not forgive defeat easily."

Baring turned toward the door. "Nevertheless I shall try," he said. "I should not advise you to stop me."

Chardon's insouciance was gone. He displayed a very real anxiety as he stepped in front of his guest.

"It means disgrace to you, perhaps ruin," he warned. "By now they've decided you were my lookout man, not merely a passer-by. They'll give you no credit for surrendering. They'll——"

But Baring, his shoulders square and his jaw set, thrust by the slighter man. He opened the door, stepped through, and turned to Chardon.

"I'll risk it," he said, and closed the door.

## CHAPTER III

### OUT FOR THE COUNT

THERE came to his ears no sound of pursuit or expostulation as he tramped down the stairs and out into the gale that greeted his coming with a howl of glee. He was not as fortunate now in getting a taxicab as before, for taxicabs were at a constantly rising premium that night. Nevertheless, he persevered, and finally was on his way up the windy avenue.

But at the tall apartment house a surprise awaited him. He stepped from his cab before the ornate entrance into a small, half-frozen crowd which stood doggedly on the sidewalk, staring at several men with flashlights, who squatted on the narrow, snow-covered grass plot that did meagre duty for a lawn in front of the building. They appeared to be brushing the snow aside with their gloved hands. A policeman, one eye on the men in mufti who worked so purposefully on the plot, made perfunctory efforts to make the crowd move on, but the stubborn watchers retreated only the distance of his arm.

"What's this?" asked Baring of the uniformed man.

The copper, noting the authority in his voice, glanced at his spruce attire and grave, forceful face, and decided to be communicative.

"Some dur-rty crook at a weddin' up above blackjacked a detective in the dark, maybe killin' him," the policeman explained. "Thin he threw a handful of jools worth hiven knows what out the winder, an' escaped wid a curio sword some fureign king wunst owned."

"What?" exclaimed Baring, and his voice was harsh. "Blackjacked a detective! Are you sure?"

"Am I sure?" The patrolman was plainly ruffled. "Wid these eyes in me head, and these arms on me, I saw him, and I helped carry him into th' ambulance. Micky Quinn he was, and as near dead as ever I saw a man. White an' still—him that was always so quick and chirpy when he come into the station house. An' his partner, Alf Surgent, went wid him, pretty near wild wid grief. God help the lad that did it if Surgent gets his big paws on him!"

He shook his head, then turned fiercely to the crowd:

"Move on, you loafers, before you freeze to the sidewalk! The show is over!"

But it was apparent from the concentration of the men with flashlights that the show was not over. Baring stood as if he had, in all truth, been stricken with the fate against which the patrolman had warned the unwelcome spectators. Chardon, then, had told him less than half the truth. Thief he had admitted himself to be, but now he was proved liar and thug as well. There was only one thing for an honest man to do about it.

Baring took a step toward the plot where the detectives labored. A hand was laid on his arm.

"Don't!" commanded a voice at his side, as he whirled.

Chardon, still minus the short mustache and owl-like goggles in which he had made his first appearance at that spot that night, stood before him. His expression was stern, and its gaunt seriousness made it compelling. Baring stared down at him, as a moment ago he had stared at nothing at all, while his brain surged with anger against this man.

"Come with me first," Chardon said, and Baring found himself following without a word of protest or accusation.

The little man led the way northward, and around the corner. In the poor shelter of a darkened doorway he stopped and faced Granville Baring.

"I trailed you, and when you found the taxi I rode with you—on the spare tire behind," he explained curtly. "I was going to get that sword back to-night. It was a challenge I could not resist. But now——"

He stopped, and Baring, framing his charge, nevertheless waited for him to speak.

"I jumped off the cab when I saw the crowd I could take shelter in. I was just behind you when that cop told you the detective had been blackjacked," Chardon went on. "I heard most of what he said. You must believe I had nothing to do with it—did not know it had occurred."

"BUT what does it mean?" demanded Baring, and he made no effort to keep suspicion and anger concealed. "You told me——"

"It means that some other man in that crowded room—some other criminal, if you will—used my darkness to grab at the presents on the table, and stopped the detective with a blackjack when he interferred," Chardon declared. "That sort of thing is not the game I play."

"It doesn't sound likely to me," Baring replied stubbornly.

Chardon threw up his hands in a swift gesture of despair.

"Very well. I'll give you two alternatives: I will permit you to surrender me to these detectives now or"—he clenched his hands resolutely—"you will help me find this assassin."

"You?" exclaimed Baring. "You, a fugitive yourself, find him?"

Chardon smiled cynically. "Even so," he said. "I do not deal in murder or blows in the dark, and I am linked to a cowardly sneak now, since I provided the darkness that was his opportunity. My indignation should carry me through. I have told you that I am brilliant in the first flush of something new. There is a thrill in being chased, my friend, but in chasing an underhanded rascal like this fellow there is a greater thrill. What is your decision?"

IN THE dim light that reached them in the doorway that was their refuge Baring considered his companion. Chardon, smaller, shivering from the cold of his ride

clinging to the rear of the taxicab, but with grim resolution in his thin, white face, returned the other man's gaze with eyes that did not falter. True, he had spoken of his own brilliance, Baring thought, but it had not been in the manner of a braggart. There had been nothing of the vainglorious about it; he had merely mentioned it to explain his manner of living, otherwise incredible.

One of his rare moments of impulse seized Baring now.

"I'll help you find him," he said.

Chardon clapped him on the arm with his thin, swift hand.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "And I promise you this—that you shall not suffer from the police for having come to my assistance this night. Remember, I mean it!"

Looking at that intense face, Baring believed, and Chardon saw that he did. Satisfied, he became instantly absorbed in the problem.

"I need your assistance," he said briskly. "Keep that sword under your coat. One sight of it by a detective will put you so tightly in the jug that you'll be worthless as an ally. But they aren't likely to recognize you—not while they're so busy, anyway. Go back to your friend the copper and find out what more you can. Then come here and wait for me."

Baring assented. Chardon seemed to know exactly what to do. Baring, to whom plans did not come as swiftly as lightning from the heavens, was content now to obey the orders of this lean, predaceous firebrand whom he had known only an hour or two. Stranger and stranger grew the situation in which he, one of the soberest young conservatives of Wall Street, found himself.

Laboring under some uneasiness and apprehension, he returned to the storm-buffeted crowd and the conversational policeman. He discovered that the officer had told all he knew, though he was willing enough to contribute theories and solutions of the detectives' problem. As Baring was about to extricate himself from the flow of words, he suddenly caught sight of Chardon.

The adventurous one loitered in the crowd, nearer the detectives than Baring. Moreover, he was wearing the horn-rimmed spectacles and ridiculous mustache that had screened his face when he had boldly attended the wedding reception. Baring shuddered at the audacity of the man.

"For a thief, he plays a very square game," he thought. "He is there to divert pursuit from me to himself, should one of those detectives recognize me. I was right in trusting him; he's not the sort that would almost kill a man in that cowardly way."

HE turned northward and made his way as briskly as the howling gale would permit toward the appointed doorway. Just before he reached the corner he looked backward at the strange scene he had quitted. It was unchanged, save that Chardon had slipped through the stubborn crowd and was following only a dozen feet behind him.

Baring breathed more easily, and brought his eyes forward once more. He swung around the corner. Suddenly he stopped—recoiled—and it seemed as if his heart stopped, too. For practically into his arms had stepped the victim of Chardon's fist, Detective Alf Surgent.

Face to face, and with the brilliant lamps above them clearly illumining their features, the two men stared at each other. Surgent's rough features, his own guilty conscience, numbed Baring.

As he stood there, unable to

move, he heard the gorgeous weapon beneath his coat fall with clatter to the wind-swept pavement. The detective saw it, and with a shout he clutched at Baring.

WHAT that sober young man did was purely instinctive; it was a fear-driven impulse, born of the guilt he felt. He lashed out with his right arm and struck the surprised sleuth squarely on his broad, flat chin.

Surgent went down in the snow without a sound, as he had dropped once before that night, but this time he remained where he had fallen. Baring, his right fist still clenched, gazed unmovingly downward. He did not look up when Chardon came around the corner and halted beside him.

Even in his bewildered state, it did not seem to Baring long before Chardon spoke. The thin adventurer apparently took in the situation in one swift glance.

"Out for the count of a hundred or more," he said coolly. "Tuck that sword under your coat somehow. Take him by the shoulders."

As if without will of his own Baring obeyed. He replaced the sword, this time with the crosspiece caught in his buttoned overcoat. It hung suspended as he bent and lifted the detective by the armpits.

"Come on," Chardon directed, gasping as he raised the big man's feet. He backed along the street a few paces, then turned into the darkened doorway that had been their meeting place. Dropping the dangling legs of the unconscious man, he fumbled at the door leading into the ornate marble vestibule, and found it unlocked. He opened the door, and Baring found himself dragging the man in. Chardon stood watching, one hand on the doorbell.

"He's all right," he whispered. "Get on your toes!" He pressed the bell. "Run!"

Baring ran, and Chardon kept pace beside him.

"Getting to be a habit to-night," the smaller man panted; but Baring, still horrified by his act, did not reply.

Chardon turned southward at the corner of Madison Avenue and halted. Then, adopting a shambling pace, he took a few steps northward, glancing up the street they had just fled through. He turned back before he had reached the middle of the street.

"No pursuit," he announced. "I think the vestibule's lighted up now. Couldn't let him freeze in there."

HE LED the way southward at a rapid pace, zigzagging eastward.

"That must have been an awkward moment—when you turned the corner," he chuckled. "Permit me to congratulate you upon the speed and decision of your movements. You have the makings of a thoroughly good crook in you."

Baring stifled a groan.

"Your value as an ally has gone up a hundred per cent," Chardon assured him. "Now not only my pride but your reputation and your freedom are at stake. We've *got* to find the thug who downed this Micky Quinn."

"I'm in it as deep as you now—or deeper," Baring conceded dismally.

"Deeper, I should say. You hit that plain-clothes bull twice as hard as I did. But what more did you learn from the copper?"

"Nothing," Baring reported, dismissing his gloomy forebodings for the moment. "They didn't tell the policeman much about it; his job was just to handle the crowd."

"I didn't have very much better

luck myself," Chardon grumbled. "However, I did discover that the detectives weren't having any success at all in their hunt for jewels in the snow. Their expressions, facial and vocal, told me that, and the man you took care of in the scrimmage declared aloud that there was nothing but frozen fingers to be found on that grass. They're still hunting, I suppose, but it's merely perfunctory now."

"That means, then, that the thief was before them," Baring suggested.

"The thief or one of the other six million people in this town," Chardon amended. He scowled thoughtfully. "A bit dumb, that, grabbing a handful of gems, and tossing them out the window. But it took quick thinking, and blackjacking the detective took quick acting. And, of course, when the lights went on again and the loss was discovered the crook could look forward with equanimity to a search of every one in the room."

"Yes," Baring agreed. "But where are we going now?"

"To Number Two, where I am known to the residents as a struggling and sometimes inebriated young poet, who disappears for weeks at a time," Chardon explained. "I want to do some thinking until the first editions of the morning papers come out. Then I'll do a little reading."

## CHAPTER IV

### EARLY MORNING EDITION

THEY plunged into the subway, and some fifteen minutes later emerged at Times Square. A short walk brought them to a rooming-house which once had been a proud residence. Chardon's room here had formerly been the back parlor. He pointed out to Baring with a flash of humor the excellencies of the slight drop to the yard behind and the low fence for one in his profession.

"An emergency exit that I shall doubtless be compelled to employ one of these days," he said. "Till then I make myself as comfortable as is permitted the unrighteous."

He waved Baring to a dilapidated leather easy-chair and himself lay down, flat on his back, on the narrow metal bed. Closing one eye, he squinted critically out of the other at the stained ceiling above him, then devoted himself to the rapid consumption of cigarettes. Baring grew restive, but Chardon paid no attention to him. At last the temporary convert to honesty lifted his left arm and consulted his cheap, nickeled wrist-watch.

"Papers are out," he announced, flinging his legs to the floor. "Get one at the subway. Be right back."

HE WAS out of the room in a flash, and it seemed no more than a minute or two before he was back with three of the morning editions. He tossed two on the table without a word, and buried himself in the third. Baring was but half through the account before Chardon dropped his paper and resumed his comfortable position on the day-bed.

"Now let's see," he said briskly. "I'll visualize the scene in that room where the wedding presents were bunched just before the lights went out. It was a sort of alcove, leading into a larger room. I am convinced that no one in the big room could have felt his way through the dark to the table, hit the detective, picked up the jewels, and thrown them out the window. That would have been a physical impossibility for any one not equip-

ped with the eyes of an owl. It must have been some one in the small room, near enough the table and the detectives to gauge distances, as I did. Every one in the alcove must be regarded with suspicion.

"Now, as I stood against the wall with the lamp cord from the base plug in my hands, I sized up the situation carefully. The lamp was one of two that had been provided in addition to the usual lighting, to cast further radiance on those thoroughly expensive presents. One stood at each end of the table, and the table itself, which ran about two-thirds the length of the room, was opposite the wide doorway.

"There was space behind it for the two detectives to stand like salesmen behind a counter. At the moment that I short-circuited the works they were within a few feet of each other, nearer the other end. Behind their backs were two windows, both closed, overlooking the street. At the end opposite me was the open window—the one that gave upon Fifth Avenue." He paused to question Baring with a glance.

The older man nodded. "That's quite plain," he said. "But why did they open the Fifth Avenue window? The storm was blowing from that direction."

"Don't know," replied Chardon shortly. "Maybe they wanted a quick, sharp blast of air to blow the foul air out of the big room. But that's a bit off the track now. We're reconstructing the situation and people in that room."

HE CLOSED his eyes. "There were the two detectives. One, the short one who was attacked, Micky Quinn, was standing with his hands locked behind his back, four or five feet from the end of the table. He was listening to the other fellow, our friend Alf Surgent, talking to a big, prosperous, well-fed chap—a middle-aged man with a hearty manner. These two were about at the end of the table, right beside the other lamp, and not far from the open window.

"There were several others—guests, by the easy way they wore their evening clothes—standing near them. They had gathered there more to get a breath of air at the open window than to listen to the two who were talking. Any man of them could have gotten behind the table, or come around in front of it, to attack the detective. I noticed among them only one person I knew—the young sprig whose invitation I had stolen—Berty Lykes. He was closest of all to the window. There was one man between him and the detective who was blackjacked. Wonder if Berty has ever found it hard to keep up that expensive bachelor apartment of his?"

He frowned meditatively, then hurried on:

"Besides this stag group, there were several gentlemen escorting ladies, and ladies unescorted, in front of the table, looking at the wedding presents."

CHARDON came to an abrupt halt and sat up.

"Let's see," he murmured, thinking with such obvious intensity that Baring eyed him with great attention. "I particularly noticed Quintley Fledge—he's the old curmudgeon I mentioned to you as willing to buy that sword without asking questions—looking at the stuff on the table. I remember his expression—greedy, covetous.

"That chap who was talking to Surgent—the big, hearty chap—interrupted himself to turn to Fledge.

"'Too late to buy any of those antiques now, old man,' he bellowed

rather mockingly. And Fledge snarled something and left the room, plowing his way through a crush in the wide doorway without much ceremony. He couldn't have done it.

"Well, in all, I'd say there were close to twenty people in the room, not half of whom I could pick out in a crowd. And I forgot! The father of the bride, Jasper Kelton Burnadine, was just leaving after having said a word to the heavy, florid man who had laughed at Fledge.

"That was the situation as I cut the cord and blackness came down on us. How did it alter immediately thereafter? I know as little about it as those others who were there. The sword was at my end of the table. I picked it up, slipped it inside my trouser top on the left side, made fast the crosspiece to my suspenders, thanked Heaven the thing wasn't longer, and then groped my way politely through the throng."

"But did you hear nothing?" Baring demanded incredulously.

"There was a big burst of laughter and comment as the rooms were thrown into darkness," Chardon answered. "Did you ever hear the uproar made when a roomful of people exclaim at once? The detective may have been hit before I left the alcove. I doubt it, but it was quite possible."

HE MEDITATED, eyes on the dingy plaster above him, before he spoke again. "That's all the first hand information we have. Now let's see how the newspaper stories fit into it."

He picked up the sheet he had discarded.

"They didn't get a full story in, but at least we know that they had no time for conjecture or theory," he said, and ran his eye down the column beneath the big scarehead. "Here's something I noticed:

> "At the time of the daring crime Jasper Kelton Burnadine, the host of the evening, was just leaving the alcove, after having called his brother, Phelps, to the telephone.
>
> "A partial list of those who were also close to the table whereon many of the gifts to the couple were displayed includes Scollard C. Gabrell, the best man——"

"And so on. That list may help us a lot, and then again it may waste a lot of our time and lead us into hopeless tangles.

"However, this gives us the identity of the florid chap who was talking to Surgent when I blew the fuse. He is Phelps Burnadine." Chardon stopped talking to smile to himself. "When I was considering old Quintley Fledge as a client—planning to lift some of his stuff, in other words—I remember reading that Fledge and Burnadine are deadly rivals in collecting precious and ancient objects of art—jewels in queer settings, precious stones with histories, the trinkets of kings or queens still remembered for their goodness or badness, even things like the Gutenberg Bible, the first book printed with movable type. Phelps Burnadine, you know, is the man who presented that sword to the bride and groom—or, rather, to me."

"That sword is going back," Baring declared emphatically.

Chardon tossed his cigarette away with a gesture of annoyance. "You have a talent for getting off the subject," he said impatiently. "The sword may be of assistance to the side of justice yet. We certainly are not going to part with it when by so doing we may be presenting the police with a clue which even they may follow toward us."

Baring did not interrupt again, so Chardon treated himself to an-

other cigarette and, squinting at the ceiling, resumed his consideration of the affair.

"We have now as possibilities both the Burnadine brothers; the detective Surgent; Gabrell, the best man; that social light Berty Lykes; seven of the guests whose names are given here, four of them men; and six or seven others—men and women whom we knew neither by name nor by sight—unless my memory is better than I think it.

"Now, we should be able to eliminate some of these immediately, for although they were physically near enough to carry out the crime, nevertheless there is nothing else that would make them suspects. For instance, the bride's father is an extremely wealthy man, and hardly likely fantastically to rob his daughter of her gewgaws when he could provide himself with many and more valuable things simply by waving a pen over a check-book. His brother, Phelps, is also wealthy. He must be, with that hobby of his. And, besides, the sword was his gift to the bride—he would hardly have taken it back in such a hurry.

"Let us eliminate them, then, and consider what we know of the movements of the detectives and of Gabrell, Lykes, and those of the others that we can name. Here's what the paper says:

"According to Mr. Phelps Burnadine, who acted as representative of the family when newspaper men requested information, not a person in the room but the robber knew of the assault and theft until more than a minute or two after the lights had gone out. Detective Surgent, with whom Mr. Burnadine was in conversation at the time, turned swiftly from him with an apology when darkness came, and said:

"'Micky! Better get your flash out.'

"Mr. Burnadine himself heard this much, but thereafter the sounds of laughter and talk prevented him from hearing anything further, although he did make out that Surgent called the name of Detective Quinn several times, as loudly as was possible without danger of alarming the guests. Finally Surgent lit a match, and the dim light of this revealed to him rifled jewel boxes and, under the table, the unconscious form of his brother detective.

"Surgent then shouted above the uproar that a robbery and perhaps murder had been committed, and commanded every one in the alcove and the large room beyond to remain motionless. Shortly thereafter the lights flashed on, and Detective Surgent immediately advised Mr. Burnadine to request his guests to remain for a time, and to ask those in the alcove to consent to a personal search.

"The detective and Mr. Phelps Burnadine then lifted the unconscious man to a couch in the alcove, where Surgent endeavored to revive him, loosening his clothes and applying first-aid methods. These failed. Detective Surgent, after ascertaining that a doctor had been summoned, turned his attention to the matter of apprehending the assailant.

"The detective suggested that he and Mr. Phelps Burnadine lead off by searching each other with the assistance of Mr. Jasper Burnadine. The detective was searched without result, and then Mr. Jasper Burnadine refused to permit the searching of his guests to go forward. All the guests had indicated their willingness to go through the ordeal.

"It was while a somewhat heated discussion was going on between Mr. Burnadine and the police officer that Surgent happened to catch sight of one of the missing articles, a ruby ring in a peculiar gold setting, on the window ledge. Since this indicated that the thief had disposed of his loot by dropping it to the grass plot below, Surgent relinquished his demand for a general search.

"At his request Mr. Jasper Burnadine accompanied him down stairs, where two other detectives were stationed, so that the grass plot might be searched and a scrutiny of departing guests might be maintained, in order to detect any who might be unknown or appear suspicious."

HERE Chardon interrupted himself with a muttered exclamation.

"In other words, not one of our suspects but the detective was searched at that precious time when even the slightest frisking might have uncovered the loot."

"But the loot had been thrown——"

Chardon cut impatiently into this comment with a quick "Yes, yes, I know!"

Then he went on, speaking aloud, though it was obvious that it was more to give form to his thoughts than to enlighten Baring.

"Later in the story it says the detectives searched the apartment thoroughly to make sure they had overlooked no clues. At least, they didn't overlook *that* bet, though apparently it did them no good. This story, then, accounts for the movements of Surgent and eliminates him, but it leaves us with too many other suspects—Gabrell, Lykes, and these other named and unnamed guests. Well, here's where I reenter the story:

> "It was when Mr. Burnadine and Surgent stepped into the elevator that the keen eye of the detective noted the clever gentleman burglar who walked—and later ran—with a limp, due undoubtedly to the fact that he had concealed in his trouser-leg the priceless Indian antique. Only the intervention of the burly lookout man who awaited his pal on the street prevented his capture."

"'Burly lookout man!'" Chardon repeated ironically. He sat down and pointed a dramatic finger at his ally. "That's you, Baring. Of course this edition hasn't anything in it of our second encounter with Surgent, but it goes on to tell how search of the grass-plot began, and how Surgent went with his unconscious side-partner, Micky Quinn, to the hospital.

"And here it says that the missing articles include a snuff-box of Charles the First, an emerald necklace made of stones said to have been worn by Anne of Austria, a Crusader's jeweled crucifix, a tiny, medieval, illuminated book, exceedingly rare and immensely valuable, and a few things of lesser importance. H'm! Funny things to give a newly married couple, but I suppose they had to give 'em *something* valuable. Oh, here's the explanation:

> "The young couple share Mr. Phelps Burnadine's enthusiasm for antiques with histories attached, and the priceless objects stolen were purchased by [illegible] for members of the bride's family to bestow upon the Tornes as a basis of a collection."

"Does your paper run along these same lines?"

BARING nodded. "The account is similar," he said. "I note, however, a brief mention of the fact, toward the end of the article, that the lights in the Burnadine apartment went out again while some detectives were talking to Mr. Burnadine and others were searching the ground under the window."

Chardon leaped to his feet and seized the newspaper abruptly from Baring's hand. "The deuce you say!" he muttered. "Again, eh?"

"Nothing happened, however," Baring said reassuringly. "At least, nothing was stolen or anything."

"No, nothing happened," Chardon repeated slowly. "Nothing happened. They just went out."

"Do you attach any significance to that?" inquired Baring.

"I attach significance to everything," the small adventurer replied emphatically. "We're up against a hard task, my friend. Do you realize that while the coppers are hot on our trail we've got to pursue this elusive thug without even sticking our heads up above the shrubbery? These detectives are much more apt to run us down and fasten both robbery and assault on us, than we are to run down this other gentleman crook. They have facilities—men, authority, everything—even two concrete thieves, of whom they have fair descriptions, to chase.

We haven't even a theory to pursue just yet."

He sank down on the couch, a figure of utter depression, and remained thus for ten long minutes, while Baring bent a perplexed gaze upon him. Then, with a snap of his fingers, he bounded up again, brisk and confident.

"Well, we'll have a whirl at it, anyhow," he announced. "But take my advice, my dear Baring, and stay under cover for the next few days. The police have a strong dislike for criminals who kill or injure members of the department, and they'll be aching to make an arrest."

"I shall take such precautions as I can," Baring said, suddenly unhappy as the thought recurred that he must walk the streets in constant fear of a hand clapped on his shoulder, and the gruff, unfriendly voice of a detective in his ear.

"BY THE way, you're not a lawyer, are you?" Chardon inquired abruptly.

"I am not," Baring assured him. "I am the junior partner in a small brokerage house."

"Good!" Chardon exclaimed. "Lawyers I abhor. If you were a lawyer, I'd always have the fear in the back of my head that your respect for law and justice might overcome your honesty, and that you might denounce me to the police and then strip me of every nickel I'd ever stolen in your efforts to get a jury to acquit me. But a stockbroker—well, they're quite likely to be honest in other ways."

"If you mean to imply——" began Baring stiffly, but Chardon clapped him on the back in the most friendly manner possible.

"No, no!" the mercurial desperado assured his ally soothingly, yet with a merry gleam in his eye. "You must remember that a thief cannot cast aspersions worthy of resentment on the character or occupation of an honest man. Forgive this levity; when my mind has thought deeply, it is very apt to froth and bubble over with nonsense."

"You have been thinking deeply?" Baring asked. "And what conclusion——"

"No conclusion—none whatever," Chardon asserted. "Merely an idea—or a theory, if you wish to use criminological terminology. I shall not disclose it to you yet, lest I prove myself a fool out of my own mouth. Let me test it first."

"And what can I do?" inquired the broker.

"Sell stocks," replied Chardon, "but give me your address and be prepared to come to my aid when I need you. To-night we can do nothing; to-morrow we may do more than that, or less. But we will rest—you upon that couch, and I in that easy chair which would not comfortably contain you."

And Baring, his objections having been disposed of as fast as he could voice them, was compelled to give way to the slender, imperious adventurer who had led him so far in one night from a life of rectitude and monotony.

## CHAPTER V

### IN THE PARK

WHEN he awakened early next morning Granville Baring was alone. The only sign remaining of Chardon's dynamic presence in the barely furnished room was a penciled scrawl upon the table:

I am off.

The storm had ceased. A glance through the window that was Char-

don's emergency exit disclosed a backyard piled high with untrodden, drifted snow, and bright with the peculiar brightness of February sunshine. Baring, blinking in the glare that threatened snow-blindness, bethought himself that he was still in evening clothes, and that he must change before venturing downtown.

The sword that he had carried beneath his coat through part of those adventurous hours of the night was gone, and with it much of the glamour and thrill that had swept Baring into an impulsive assault upon Detective Alf Surgent. This morning such a thing as knocking a detective unconscious and depositing him in the darkened vestibule of a house was unthinkable.

BARING left the rooming house, apparently unnoticed by its denizens and the landlady. Soberly enough he tramped across town over sidewalks swept and sidewalks snowy, meditating on what step he must take. What should he say to Chardon if that *enfant perdu* called on him to take further part in this questionable business? Or would Chardon call him up? Certainly, as a thief, Chardon should be well content to vanish with the precious sword he had now stolen twice. But would he? Though the spell of the previous evening had worn thin, it had not worn off. Baring could not make himself believe that Chardon's declaration of war against the thief who had pre-empted his darkness and nearly killed a detective in it, was a false one. This gaunt, dominating little man had meant what he said. But he had confessed, too, that he was the most changeable and unstable of men.

Absorbed in these thoughts, Baring reached Fifth Avenue. There he paused, to decide whether to take a bus up the avenue or to walk further east to a street car or subway that would take him nearer his small apartment. The bus won.

BUT as the heavy vehicle rumbled and bounced northward, past gangs of men busy with the clearing of the avenue, Chardon's words of warning recurred. It would be a foolhardy thing to alight at the very corner on which his fist had brought him into jeopardy.

He pressed the button several blocks below his street, and, alighting, stood for a moment on the curb, looking northward. He could see nothing unusual going on up the avenue; but that merely piqued his curiosity, and when his glance fell upon a park entrance across the avenue he crossed and followed the snowy path without hesitation.

The walk he chose led northward, and, despite its windings, it never departed very far from the wall that separated the park from Fifth Avenue. Baring's eye dwelt upon the windows on the eighteenth floor, and he pictured the building in darkness, and the thief's hand dropping the loot upon the snow-covered patch of earth beneath. It did not seem quite plausible, in the sober light of day; and, Baring reflected, the detectives certainly had found none of it.

But might not the thief, knowing that the avenue below was frequented even during a storm in the night, have flung his small bundle of booty across the avenue into the deserted park? Baring stopped suddenly, struck with this idea. From that elevation it seemed possible. He walked on, his pace quicker, until he was opposite the huge building. Then he left the path and walked through the bushes toward the wall. The storm had fallen far short of its threat to assume blizzard proportions, but nevertheless it

had left behind it four or five inches of snow, which in places had become drifts a foot or more in height.

Baring's theory seemed less plausible to him as he approached the wall. There was a vast amount of space to be searched, and the snow that had fallen and drifted since the theft would certainly have covered over any packet or individual object of value that might have been hurled from that high window. It would take an optimistic thief, indeed, to expect to recover his booty from the snow, unless he had hurried away from the reception at the first opportunity and searched here with a flashlight while, beyond the wall and avenue, the detectives investigated the grass plot.

BARING paused beside the wall, slowly deciding to abandon his quest. After all, it was the thief, not the loot, that Chardon and he had resolved to discover. What could be gained—— His meditations were disturbed by a scraping sound, nearby. As he glanced over his shoulder a man dropped from the wall above him onto the snow and, as he fell, neatly gripped Baring about the knees. An instant later Baring was down on his back, and his assailant was upon his chest, one hand on his throat, the other upon his right wrist.

"Ye'd better not try to start anything, my fine gintleman," a voice, vaguely familiar, warned him. "I've got ye good and proper now."

Baring looked up into the triumphant face that was half glaring, half grinning, at him. Slowly recognition came. This belligerent young man in civilian attire was the patrolman who had obligingly furnished him with information on the sidewalk in front of the apartment house last night! He was caught! The worst he had feared had descended upon him as unexpectedly as a pouncing hawk.

He lay unmoving, breathing with difficulty under the weight of the heavy patrolman. His captor, now that the prospect of a desperate fight had vanished, was grinning more broadly than ever. Indeed, it seemed to the disgusted broker that the policeman regarded him with more friendly eyes than when he had answered questions so outspokenly on the previous night. He was not left long to wonder at this phenomenon.

"And if this don't bring me promotion, my beauty, I'll eat my night-stick *and* the visor off me cap!" the jubilant policeman confided, continuing to repose upon Baring's chest. "'Twould have been better, for the sake o' the looks o' the thing, if ye had marked me in the eye or bungled my nose; but it's fine as it stands. Here's all these furst-grade detectives and detective sergeants and captains o' detectives running around town tryin' to find ye, and where are ye?

"Under Patrolman Thomas Delehanty, who gave up his sleep to wurrk out a little thee-ory of his own an' trapped th' disperate criminal lookin' for the jools an' stuff in the park, where he throwed 'em. I bin waitin' for ye since eight o'clock, an' ye've been a long time comin'."

SO THAT was it! An ambitious young copper had followed his own train of thought, and more successfully, since the officer had found what he was after, and he had not. Baring smothered an ejaculation of anger, and looked with calculating eyes at the man who continued to sit at ease on top of him. Could he bluff him?

"What's the meaning of all this?" he demanded, as indignantly as the

shortage of breath induced by the weight on his chest permitted. "I recognize you: you're the officer who told me about the robbery last night. Have you taken leave of your senses?"

"Not I," retorted Patrolman Thomas Delehanty complacently. "Ye recognize me, and I recognize you. Ye're the man that sint Alf Surgent to sleep not a block away from where ye'd talked to me. Ye'll do time for it up the river."

"You think I attacked this man?" inquired Baring, trying hard to put amazement in his voice. "Is that your reason for pouncing upon me like this?"

"Ye've guessed it," said Delehanty. "An' no amount of gab will do ye any good, so ye may as well hould yer whisht. Ye'll have fine opportunities to talk yerself blue in the face when I march ye into police headquarters."

The patrolman's serene certainty discouraged Baring, but he preserved an unmoved countenance.

"I see that it is useless to protest against this," he said curtly. "If you will get off my chest I will go with you and take the matter up with your superiors."

THE policeman narrowly surveyed the man who lay under him in the snow.

"That suits me fine," he agreed, "but first——" With quick fingers he ran over Baring's figure, paying particular attention to his pockets, and burrowing into the snow beneath his thighs to tap his hips. Baring felt a surge of gratitude that Chardon had taken away the sword. The finding of it upon him now would have been the end of everything.

"All right," said the patrolman amiably, standing up. "I'll not put the cuffs on ye for four reasons: First, I have a gun; sicond, I have a sap, which ye might call a blackjack; thurrd, I can outsprint ye easy; and fourth, I have no cuffs. Come along peaceable an' we'll be the best o' friends."

Baring arose stiffly, and the patrolman brushed him off with large and hearty hands. Then, without a word, he walked beside him out of the park, thinking too deeply upon his predicament to pay much attention to the cheery patter and self-congratulations of the policeman. He gathered that Delehanty entertained an emphatic contempt for the detective force—which disdain, however, did not seem to interfere in his own mind with a burning ambition to become a detective himself.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LINE-UP

THE police station was not far away, nor did it take long for the desk lieutenant in charge to instruct the jubilant Delehanty to take his captive down to the line-up at Police Headquarters as speedily as possible.

To Baring's deep discomfiture, a reporter endeavored to interview him in the station house, but the lieutenant gruffly commanded the newspaper man to "keep away from the prisoner."

However, it was not to the line-up, but to the office of a bald-headed captain of detectives that Delehanty, pursuant to orders received as he entered the building on Centre Street, escorted Baring. There he waited two hours for the captain to return. Was this intentional? Could it be part of the third degree to let him stew for a time?

Captain Bernard Greenaway did not look overlong at the broker when finally he entered, but his quick, al-

most furtive glance had in it the quality of an exhaustive examination. He listened impassively to Patrolman Delehanty's description of the capture, and then studied the pad on which he had noted down Baring's name, address, occupation, and a few other particulars.

Again, quite abruptly, that shrewd eye dwelt upon the prisoner. It was quite plain to Baring that both he and this police official knew that his arrest was either a great achievement of the police or a great blunder.

Baring had made his statement and stuck to it tenaciously. In arresting him for complicity in the robbery the police were doing a great injustice. He had no objection to giving his "pedigree" or even to being finger-printed, but he declined absolutely to say anything whatever about his movements or anything else until he had consulted his attorney.

"I have no wish to be third-degreed," he said coolly, "and you, as an intelligent man, must realize that it would be valueless to you in my case."

"It is the duty of every citizen to aid the police," Captain Greenaway said, obviously nettled by the mention of the third degree. "If he does not——" He paused significantly.

"Arresting an innocent man is not the right way to make him talk," Baring filled in the gap. "I presume that I *am* under arrest?"

Captain Greenaway did not reply until he had shifted the pad from one side of the blue blotter to the other, and then back again.

"You are," he said at last, and his voice was inflexible and formal. "It is my duty to warn you that anything you say may be used against you. You will be held for forty-eight hours on a short affidavit alleging felonious assault, or until Detective Surgent is able to come down to police headquarters to identify you as the man who assaulted him and dragged him, unconscious, into a vestibule."

Baring felt a qualm of conscience. His blow, then, had put Surgent out of the running for more than a few minutes. That was bad. He conquered his uneasiness with an effort.

"I suppose that this means that you're afraid the other detectives on the case cannot make a positive identification," he said.

GREENAWAY jumped to his feet and leveled an accusing finger at the prisoner. "And how did you know that we suspected you were the lookout who took part in that fight on the side street?" he demanded.

His manner was triumphant as he fixed his eyes rigidly on Baring.

But the broker did not falter. "I am perfectly willing to admit that I am guilty of reading the morning papers, which state that this lookout individual was the man who later assaulted Detective Surgent."

Greenaway sat down again without the slightest indication that he was crestfallen. "What were you doing under the wall in the park?" he asked.

"It would not take much of a detective to work out the answer to that," Baring replied. "The antiques were thrown from the window; the detectives did not find them in the grass plot or on the street; is it criminal for a citizen interested in the case to attempt to discover them for the police in the park?"

"Just why are you interested in this——" began Greenaway, but paused with a frown as a uniformed patrolman with an apologetic expres-

sion stuck his head in the door. "What is it?" the captain rasped.

"Excuse me, captain, but the gentleman's lawyer is on the wire."

"Tell him I'm busy!" snapped the captain of detectives.

The head in the doorway wavered uneasily, and the eyes of the patrolman looked meaningly at Baring and then back at the police official. Greenaway got up from his desk with an irritable shove of his arm-chair, and walked over to the door. A brief conversation, murmured on both sides, ensued. Then Greenaway turned back.

"All right; put him on," he growled. To Baring, who had been endeavoring to maintain a poker face during this surprising interruption, he said gruffly.

"We are not holding you *incommunicado*, you understand. You will be permitted to speak to your attorney."

"Thank you," said Baring. He was wondering how his lawyer could have heard—— The telephone on the captain's desk cut short his surprised thoughts. Greenaway nodded toward it curtly, and went out of the room.

"HELLO! Baring? This is Andy," the voice on the other end of the telephone said. "Speak slowly and distinctly when you answer so the police stenog who's taking us down will get it all."

Baring gulped at the frank warning, then answered shakily:

"All right." The voice of his caller was the breezy, impertinent voice of Andrew Chardon!

"I suppose you want to know how I know you require my legal services," Chardon went on. "Well, you're in the newspapers already. You're going to court this afternoon, and you'll have to arrange about bail with your other attorney, for I'm busy on another case. Do you understand?"

"I can get bail," Baring said, still wondering at the cheery audacity of this criminal ally of his.

"Fine!" exclaimed Chardon. "When you do get out take a few taxi rides and duck in and out of several subway trains just as they're leaving stations. That's so you won't be leading a parade of detectives. . . . Got that down, stenographer?"

He paused, as if he expected a word of confirmation from the policeman he felt sure was listening in. Then he continued:

"Meet me to-night at the second place and we'll talk over the legal aspects of the case. Is that plain?"

"It is," Baring replied. The "second place" was undoubtedly the furnished room in which he spent the night.

"Meanwhile, don't let Captain Greenaway irritate you. He's a great hand at getting a man talking mad, I'm told, but he works up to it gradually."

"Thanks for the warning. By George, he was trying it when you interrupted and——" Baring hesitated, then went on honestly: "I should say, on looking back, that he was on the verge of making me talk."

Chardon chuckled. "That's why I called up," he said. "It takes a lawyer to divine these tricks. See you to-night, then, but don't bring any of your police playmates along. Good-by!"

THE telephone clicked before Baring could say another word. Greenaway was back in the room after a few minutes of delay. When he entered, Baring found his face unreadable.

"We have a pleasant surprise for you," the captain of detectives an-

nounced. "Detective Lundholm is here. He's going to identify you as soon as we can scrape up a few men to stand in the line with you."

"Interesting, if true," remarked Baring politely. He was very much more on his guard now than he had been before Chardon warned him.

"And if he can't identify you," Greenaway paused impressively, "you will be released at once, with our apologies."

"That sounds eminently sensible," Baring applauded. This announcement that there was to be a line-up out of which he was to be picked now seemed to him suspicious. He remembered vaguely that this method of proving an identification was used when citizens picked out assailants, but he had never heard of a detective being compelled to indicate his man in that way.

Was this, too, one of Greenaway's tricks? Did the detective captain feel that when Lundholm suddenly pointed him out in a group of men he would be moved to admit his guilt? Well, Greenaway would be surprised by his attitude.

THE line-up was not long in being formed. Baring found himself the fourth man in a row of citizens gathered from the corridors of police headquarters. Suddenly a man came into the room. He walked briskly. With thumping heart Baring realized that it was his opponent of the encounter in the storm. With great confidence the detective ran his eye along the line of uncomfortable men. Baring mastered his panic with an effort.

The tap on the shoulder did not come. No finger pointed him out as the guilty man. Instead, Lundholm, after his swift glance, shifted his feet, as if uneasy, and gazed down the line. With a gathering frown he walked to a point directly in front of the first man, and spent some little time in staring at him. This man was rather similar to Baring in build, and the broker felt his heart give a spasmodic jump, like the overburdened motor of a car. The second and third men the detective dismissed with no more than a keen glance; then his steady, level gaze was upon Baring.

HE TOOK his time. First he met Baring's eyes; studied his face with compressed lips; then his eyes traveled down Baring's figure and up again to his frozen countenance. And, unbelievably, the eyes leaped to the next man in line. Baring fought and subdued a gasp of relief and a desire to relax. He held his rigid pose until Lundholm had ceased to scrutinize the last man in the line.

"You sure he's in this line, captain?" the detective asked nervously, walking up the line again toward Greenaway.

The captain nodded curtly. As if that were a signal, Lundholm whirled and thrust a finger, as if it were a knife, at Baring's chest.

"You're the man!" he snarled, his face contorting with rage, histrionic or real. "Thought I didn't recognize you, eh? Put your hands out!"

Almost involuntarily, in his anguish and surprise, Baring stretched forth his hands. The detective seized the right hand none too gently, and his accusing forefinger indicated the cracked skin on one knuckle.

"There's the proof, captain!" he shouted. "Come through, you! You slugged me and you slugged Surgent!"

"This is very powerful acting," Baring said, but his voice sounded faint and unconvincing to his own ears. "You are doing the stage an injustice in keeping this man on your staff."

"Thank you, gentlemen," Captain Greenaway said softly to the staring men in the line-up. "I shall not need you longer."

They filed out, and a buzz of talk and ejaculation came faintly to Baring through the closed door. Lundholm left, too. Baring found himself facing the keen eyes of Greenaway in the suddenly silent office.

"Why did you stay away from your apartment all night?" Greenaway asked quietly. "Don't you think you'd better take the plea on this and get off with a light sentence?"

There was a deadly confidence in his voice that weighted Baring's spirit, but he raised his eyes undauntedly to the police official's face.

"Any further communications to me from you must be through my attorney," he said steadily.

## CHAPTER VII

### BACK IN NUMBER TWO

THAT afternoon had much the mazed quality of a nightmare to Granville Baring. Dimly he perceived himself being arraigned in court; he heard the voice of his attorney arguing with the magistrate about the amount of bail necessary in such an obvious error of the police; and then he discovered his partner gripping his hand and leading him through a swarm of reporters to a car outside the court-house.

Nowhere did he get a glimpse of the mobile countenance of Andrew Chardon. He wondered rather idly if he were acting like a fool in not speaking frankly to the police. But then he remembered the grim determination of that queer little man, and a wave of confidence and loyalty welled up in him and swept away the nightmare feeling.

"I know you think all this is funny, John, but it'll all clear up in a day or so," he said to his silent, thoughtful partner.

"I don't regard you as a crook—yet, Gran," said his associate with a laugh. But despite his effort to be reassuring, Baring caught a worried expression on his partner's face. He knew what his loyal friend was thinking about. The Street is not slow to believe evil of a man, and all this might well bring disaster to their small business if it were not cleared up at once.

As soon as he possibly could, Baring immersed himself in work, as an innocent man would. When he left the office that evening, various tests his ingenuity suggested failed to tell him whether he was still under police surveillance; so he did not forget, later that night, to follow out Chardon's request to lose any possible trailer by pursuing a tortuous and back-trailing course in the labyrinth of New York traffic. Convinced that no one was after him, he made his way somewhat dejectedly to the dilapidated rooming house in a block west of Times Square.

CHARDON was there before him, and, after greeting his visitor warmly, stretched full length on the narrow iron cot in the back parlor. He listened without comment to Baring's recital of his adventures, though his eyes flickered in a peculiar way when the broker told of how he had gone into Central Park.

"This man Surgent is obtuse, but not under the weather, as Captain Greenaway would have you believe," he said at the close of his ally's narrative. "He was not laid up in bed this morning; he was enjoying a splendid opportunity to make an important pinch—my own, in fact. But he failed."

"What—you?" exclaimed Baring in astonishment.

"Told you we'd have to stick our heads up and take a chance at being cracked, if we're going to land our enemy, the assailant of Micky Quinn," he said. "You stuck yours up with a vengeance, and my own skull was also exposed. I paid a morning call on the Burnadine apartment."

Baring stared.

"Oh, not quite as I am, of course," Chardon amended. "I was a bit smeared, and even smudged, and perhaps darker than I am now, and I wore a suit of unbecoming clothes. And before I went I inquired over the telephone, in my most official voice, if the detectives were there, and then announced that police headquarters was sending an electrician to look over the wiring system to determine just what had caused the lights to go off."

"But I thought you said——"

"Oh, yes, it was my penknife the first time, but I was rather interested in the cause of the second falling of darkness. You recall that the newspaper mentioned it? Naturally, the thief was responsible for that. The fact that he thought my darkness was his—if I may put it that way—and the fact that his darkness came after the excitement was all over, indicated that it was some previously arranged automatic and more elaborate device than my modest penknife. If this theory is right, then it was an inside job, for it doesn't seem likely that another unbidden guest could walk in and rig up his light extinguisher in the midst of the crowd. No, some one in the house did that long before the reception, so I decided."

CHARDON sat up suddenly. "And I was right," he declared. He jumped up and walked over to the scratched pine dresser and picked up from it an electric light bulb.

"See that?" he said to Baring. "Looks quite ordinary, doesn't it? Well, it isn't. The thing is so designed that when the filament has burned for a certain, rather indefinite length of time, it gradually heats up the two wires in the little tube in the base of the bulb. And those wires are longer than they should be, and twisted, so that as they expand with the heat there will come a time when they touch and of course blow out the fuse, just as my short-circuiting penknife blew it out. It's really quite a trick, and the lamp's a hard one to make."

"It is, indeed," the broker agreed, staring distrustfully at the lamp.

CHARDON laid it on the dresser again and resumed his place on the bed.

"But what I was going to tell you about is what a narrow escape I had," he said. "It was quite a job to look over the whole lighting system. I had an audience, too, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Burnadine, Phelps Burnadine, Gabrell, who was best man, you know, and Berty Lykes, who had apparently just horned in because of the excitement. I managed to make fairly fast progress in examining the various wall plugs, sockets, candelabra, lamps, and so forth, and finally I came on the fixture directly above the table on which the presents had rested. In that I found this innocent-looking frosted bulb of high candle-power. I managed to dissemble my excitement when I discovered that there was something wrong with it, though the Burnadine brothers and that Lykes nuisance were watching me quite closely.

"As soon as I could, I put it in my pocket, and proceeded with the examination, talking to my inter-

ested on-lookers to try to find out if any one had discovered the marks of my knife on the lamp cord. The detectives had missed it entirely, I learned. Once Jasper Burnadine got talking, he told me they had also forgotten or failed to see a flashlight that had rolled under a radiator in the room of the presents. A maid had discovered it earlier in the morning, and given it to Burnadine. He passed it on to me without objection when I asked him for it."

CHARDON paused dramatically. "And just then," he said, "my friend Alf Surgent was announced."

"I think I know how you felt," Baring said, thinking of the line-up, but the adventurer corrected him ruthlessly.

"No, you don't! You couldn't! Of course, I didn't know how close in touch with the activities of police headquarters he was, but I bluffed it out, anyhow, telling him just what I'd told the Burnadines. He was surprised to see me, I judged, but he took it all like a lamb. I don't mind telling you that I felt very much like a gentleman holding a greased rattlesnake by the tail."

"Why didn't you divert his mind from it by giving him the flashlight?" Baring suggested.

"Not I," Chardon retorted emphatically. "I needed that flash. But what I did do was quite as effective. I proceeded to discover my own cut in the lamp cord. That pleased him."

"Ah!" said Baring. "That was clever. If he was pleased, I suppose he meant to grab the credit for that at police headquarters."

"HE CERTAINLY made the most of it," Chardon remarked dryly. "And so did I. While he was deducing things I faded discreetly away and skipped as fast as I could out of my electrician's garb. Then I hurried over to West Fifty-sixth Street, where the disabled Micky Quinn lives."

"I thought he was in the hos——"

"The telephone had undeceived me about that," Chardon explained. "Micky was diagnosed as a bad case of concussion and a possibly fractured skull, with brain fever and all kinds of complications threatened; but he recovered consciousness about six this morning. No paper shell almond is Micky's head. And he kicked up such a fuss about being in the hospital for a mere crack on the conch, as he called it, that just to keep him quiet they sent him home in an ambulance.

"By waving the flashlight and talking vaguely about 'the department,' I permitted his wife to deduce I was a brother tec, but of course when I got by her into Micky's bedroom and found him sitting up in bed taking nourishment, I had to tell him the truth—that is, I had to admit I was a reporter."

"Suppose he had recognized you as one of the men in the room when the lights went out?" Baring suggested.

"In that case, I would have departed as speedily as possible," Chardon replied with a grin.

"He was able to talk, though white about the gills, and a trifle sore because none of his fellow sleuths had called as yet. Of course they hadn't, because they all thought he was still in the hospital. But, anyhow, I decided that I had to work fast. I handed Micky his flashlight, hoping he'd be grateful and talk frankly to me. But he looked at it and told me it was Surgent's. If I can quote him correctly, he said:

"'Ye see, before I got the clip on the head, I heard Alf askin' me

if I had me flash, and I remimbered he'd told me he'd lent his to somebody an' gotten it back burned out. But I hadn't brought mine at all, being uncomfortable enough in thim stiff clothes, without the burden of a flashlight, too. So there we were in the dark, with me reachin' for a box of matches whin the roof fell in on me head.'

"That, of course, explained why I'd made such an easy and unlighted getaway with the sword. I picked up the flash and toyed with it idly while I questioned him further. No, he said, he couldn't remember anybody in the alcove that he'd suspect as his assailant. Indeed, his picture of the situation was much less vivid than my own. While I was talking to him I twisted off the lens of the flash and took a squint at the bulb. I discovered instantly that it wasn't burnt out; it was merely loose in the socket. A half-turn lighted it."

"ANOTHER clue!" exclaimed Baring. "If we can find out who borrowed it from Surgent, we'll know pretty well who put in that doctored bulb: in other words, the man who tried to kill Quinn."

"Perhaps," said Chardon without enthusiasm. "And then again we may be led into a labyrinth of false clues by what happens to be a mere conicidence or something equally valueless to us."

Baring's face fell. "We don't seem to be getting anywhere, then," he muttered uneasily. "And if I am not cleared of this charge within a day or so it means ruin for myself and my partner. Business in Wall Street is based on credit and confidence, you know. We're not hit badly yet, for most of our customers and business associates still regard my arrest as an error of the police."

Chardon patted the worried broker on the back.

"Courage, my friend," he said. "What did I promise? That you shall not suffer from the police if I can prevent it. Give me just twenty-four hours to devote to this matter. If I do not find our man in that time, then"—he smiled sadly—"then I will take the sword and my person to the police with a story that will exonerate you."

His eyes darkened, narrowed, as he surveyed some secret vision of what would come then. "For me, the consequences of failure are—forgive my mention of it—even more serious than for you."

"I believe you would surrender yourself," Baring said. The sight of Chardon's perfectly concealed fear made any other thought ridiculous. "But I cannot per——"

Chardon shook his head vigorously, as if to shake out of it some gloomy picture. "I went into this with eyes open, for a thrill," he said. "I must not confess myself over-thrilled and yearning for a safe and dull career at this moment. You are the innocent bystander, and my wickedness shall not bring ruin to you. I promise!" His voice was strong, almost ringing.

"I cannot bring myself to accept this sacrifice," Baring protested, but Chardon interrupted with a laugh once more reckless, almost exultant.

"You cannot escape it, my fellow conspirator. Within one day—I have decided. If my theory is right, we need fear nothing. This is a most interesting game I play."

He moved quickly to Baring's side and gestured toward the door. "Go home," he advised. "Sleep and forget. But to-morrow—will you take orders from me?"

"Certainly," the broker said without hesitation. "What shall I do?"

Chardon moved to the table, took a pencil from his pocket, and wrote rapidly on a scrap of paper.

"There's the name," he said. "Quintley Fledge—you've heard me mention him—and the address. The owner of it is one of the strangest men in New York. I've studied him professionally before. As I've told you, he is a collector—absorber would be the better word—of treasures of antiquity. From Egypt, from the Far East, from every European country, and from private collections here, objects of art come to him, drawn by the powerful lodestone of his wealth. Always he buys, and everything he gets his claws on disappears forever into his private vaults. He is a miser of art. These stolen trinkets would be in his line. I know he tried vainly to induce Phelps Burnadine to sell them to him."

"But we eliminated him last night!" protested Baring, as he stared at the name on the paper.

Chardon smiled. "So we did. You have a good memory, my friend. And it was very strange indeed that he was there, for ordinarily he spends his time on no such fripperies as wedding receptions. I have a shrewd idea—based on a study I once made of his habits—that he spends his nights playing with his treasures like any other miser, down in an underground vault in that huge, rococo family palace of his on Murray Hill."

"And what do you want me——"

CHARDON answered this at once. "Watch that house," he said. "When you see a thin, brisk little old man with a thick crop of white hair, worn a trifle long, leave the front door, follow him. Probably he will walk. But if you value your reputation and my freedom don't permit that watery blue eye of his to fall on you, for he's as quick to take alarm as an antelope."

"And am I to do more than follow him?" Baring asked.

"That will be enough," replied Chardon. "Be prepared to tell me everything he does, every place he goes, but don't get too close to him unless——" He paused, seeming to wrestle with some problem in phraseology. "Unless," he added slowly, "he does something—goes somewhere that leads you to believe that there is some connection between him and those missing wedding gifts. Then risk it! Remember you have much to win, and be bold!"

"If you could be more explicit——" Baring suggested.

"I can say no more, for you are of more value in this matter blind than if your eyes were open too wide," Chardon said, and was obstinately silent.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ON THE TRAIL

BARING left him there and went down the chipped brownstone steps with a feeling of strange confidence in this small, enigmatic desperado warring within him against a very lively fear of the powerful arm of the law that now clutched him so securely. He was a malefactor out on bail, and the only thing that stood between him and conviction appeared to be the clever but erratic brain of this confessed thief. Was he wise in obeying the mysterious orders issued by this adventurer?

But although doubt dwelt within him, Baring was dressed early next morning after a night of fitful dozing, and without a thought of disobeying, he pursued just such a tortuous course as he had used the

evening before to throw detectives off his trail.

His movements brought him eventually to a post in a quiet bookshop on a corner diagonally opposite Fledge's house. For an hour he poured over volumes of biography at the shelf nearest the door, and was on the verge of making a purchase to assure his position in the shop when a manservant swung open the outer door in the ornate portico he was watching. The short, quick-moving figure of an old man such as Chardon had described stepped forth.

BEFORE Baring could lay hand on the doorknob his quarry had raised an imperative hand and halted an empty taxicab. An instant later he was on his way toward Fifth Avenue.

Baring, fear of failure clutching him, was able nevertheless to cross the street without agitation visible to Fledge, were he looking through the rear window of his cab. A big sedan passed, going in the same direction as the cab. As it interposed its bulk Baring turned and sprinted after it. Using this as cover, he ran toward Fifth Avenue, until a shrieking of brakes ahead told him that the traffic signal on the Avenue had gone green. He jumped to the sidewalk and strode down the street, his eyes surveying the distance to each of the few unoccupied cabs stricken motionless at Fifth Avenue by the green eye of the law.

Like a man out for a constitutional, he stretched his legs at every stride, eyes on the line-up of automobiles ahead. His pace, or his luck, was excellent, for he found himself beside an empty and somewhat dilapidated taxi almost behind the one in which sat the man he was trailing.

"Follow that green taxi," he instructed the driver, a big fellow who hunched uncomfortably over his wheel.

"Sumpin' juicy in it fer me?" the chauffeur whined eagerly.

Baring nodded, and the fellow swung open his door with alacrity. An instant later the tide of traffic swept into movement, and, at the cost of a curse or two, the big driver swung his ill-looking cab across the lane of traffic in a left-hand turn that put him precisely behind the green cab.

Onward the two cabs whisked down the avenue, with Baring huddled in a corner, wishing he had picked a man more skilled in unobtrusive trailing. If the green cab stopped on a deserted side street and Fledge was on the alert, he could not hope to avoid being seen. He leaned forward to speak to the driver, but sat up quickly as the brakes screamed.

The cab ahead was slowing, and working toward the curb. Before Baring had time to say a word, his own cab swerved to the curb and halted. He was out of his seat and on the sidewalk before the other car had stopped rolling. His driver grinned as Baring silently passed him a ten dollar bill. An instant later he was one of a dozen people gazing intently at a gentleman demonstrating a razor strop in a drug-store window.

QUINTLEY FLEDGE paid off his cab and passed under a great granite archway the height and massive construction of which advertised the stability and permanence of the bank it served. It was a busy hour, and Baring had no hesitancy in following Fledge in. But the collector did not pass up the board stairs to the marble lobby; instead, he turned sharply to the right and descended steps cut into the solid

stone foundation of the building. Baring glanced at the heavy metal plate on the great stone slab that was the lintel. It told him that Fledge was entering a safe deposit vault.

The words of Chardon echoed in his brain as he stood irresolute. Was this vault in some way a connection between Fledge and the stolen gems, such as his ally had told him to look for? "Remember you have much to win, and be bold!"

Baring went down the steps. His attention was upon the man disappearing in front, but suddenly the sound of light footsteps behind him forced themselves upon his ears. There was something stealthy, something sinister, in the soft slip of shoes over the stone of the stairs. Involuntarily he looked around.

A man was descending behind him, and though he was lean and short, the soles of his shoes were so thick that normally they would have produced more than a faint lisp as he stepped downward. Moreover, Baring's quick movement brought his eyes into contact with a pair of cold blue eyes that had been fixed firmly on the back of his head.

Baring went on, but cold perspiration leaped out upon his forehead. He was followed! What crime were they fastening upon him now? Or were they merely collecting more evidence against him as the assailant of Alf Surgent and the accessory in the Burnadine robbery?

Automatically he continued to go down the steps. There was nothing else to do. But he felt himself descending into a trap—a steel-sheathed, time-locked trap which would never open until he had been branded as a thief and condemned to prison. Had Chardon played him false—engineered him into some position in which the whole guilt of that evening should fall upon his shoulders alone? He could not believe that!

HE SWUNG open a glass door and found himself facing the non-committal countenance of a gray-uniformed guard. The man had just swung open and shut an iron grille to admit Fledge within the enclosure. With a mighty effort the broker pulled himself together and addressed the attendant of the gate in his usual quiet, business-like voice:

"I wish to make inquiries about renting a small safe, if you have any vacant at the mo——"

Without hesitation the heavy door swung open for him too.

"Step in, sir," said the guard. "The assistant manager will be here in just a moment. This is our dull time of day, and he went up to the bank on business. We have to keep the other two men inside all the time." He waved a hand toward the great steel vault, with its massive circular door, which occupied one quarter of the enclosure.

Baring muttered a reply, and the guard politely indicated a sombre-looking bench near the iron gate.

"Please take a seat, sir."

Baring walked toward it, and, as he sat down, he caught a glimpse of Quintley Fledge handing a key to one of the two attendants who stood just within the huge steel door of the vault itself. Then Fledge followed the man into the circular orifice. But the sight did not really interest Baring; his eyes turned instantly, though covertly, to the short, stealthy man who had followed him down the steps.

He was at the barred gate now, and, with a surge of fear, Baring saw him greet the guard with confidence, as he opened coat and over-

coat to display something on his waistcoat. At the same time he said a few low words. Again the gate swung open. The uniformed man, in response to a question, nodded toward one of the many empty private booths provided for clients. The short trailer walked toward it, sending one sharp, unreadable glance at Baring as he passed. The ground-glass door of the booth swung to behind him, but did not close entirely.

Stewing in his overcoat, but too overcome to open it, Baring waited in the silent, deserted enclosure. Was there a chance that he was mistaken? Could he walk out of this place of bars a free man? Or was . . .

HE CEASED to think, as sheer horror paralyzed his brain. For the outer door had opened again, and Detective Alf Surgent stood before the iron grille. The guard, with impassive face, admitted him.

Baring cowered on the bench, his shoulders bent, his head lowered as if studying his gloved hands. He felt guilty to the bottom of his soul. His ears were alert for the sound of heavy footsteps approaching him, but he heard, instead, a low-voiced colloquy between Surgent and the guard. He kept his gaze downward, for he knew that if the detective's eyes met his, recognition would be inevitable.

Surgent left the guard and moved toward Baring. His shoes came within range of Baring's eyes. They neared him, then tramped by without a pause. Baring permitted himself a darting glance upward when the detective was past the bench. Surgent was moving toward the vault, fumbling in his pocket and bringing forth a bunch of keys. He too entered the massive portal of the underground treasury. Had the detective, as well as Chardon, suspected Fledge of connection with the robbery?

Baring, in utter confusion, strained his ears to catch sounds within the vault. Nothing but a subdued murmur reached him. He eyed uneasily the booth door slightly ajar, behind which that formidable trailer still concealed himself; then turned his attention once more to the vault.

While he watched, Fledge stepped briskly forth and headed toward an empty booth whose door stood open. Behind him walked the vault attendant, bearing a large safe deposit box. The man entered the booth behind Fledge, set the box on the desk, turned on the light and left. From within, Fledge closed the door.

Shortly afterwards Surgent emerged from the vault bearing a much smaller box tucked under his arm. He glanced around quickly as he stepped out, then made his way to the booth next to the lighted door of Fledge's. He entered it and turned on the light. Not more than a minute later Surgent, still holding his box, came out of his booth, closed the door, and, after another lightning-like survey of the almost deserted room, darted into Fledge's compartment.

Baring clutched his hands together tightly, awaiting the sound of high voices, perhaps a scream from the old miser; but not a murmur came to his ears. Side by side, the lights of the two booths glowed behind the ground glass panels, but no other evidence of human occupancy came to his straining senses.

"Well! I didn't expect to see you here," a low but cordial voice right at Baring's elbow remarked. The broker started violently as his eyes jumped from the lighted doors to the man in front of him.

It was Chardon, and his right

hand was outstretched, reaching most enthusiastically for Baring's.

"Shake hands; wake up," the little adventurer muttered swiftly under his breath. "Is Micky Quinn here?"

"Surgent's got Fledge in that booth there," Baring whispered. "A man's been trailing me—here he comes!"

Chardon chuckled delightedly as the man whose chill eyes had struck terror to Baring swung open the door of the booth in which he had been concealed and walked toward him.

"Permit me to introduce my friend, Detective Quinn," Chardon murmured. "Quinn, this is the innocent bystander I told you about. He's been invaluable in helping me on this case."

His eyes hardly moved toward Baring; then they swept back instantly to the glass door of the booth occupied by Surgent and Fledge, and they blazed with a flame more terrible than the bitter, cold gaze he had bent upon the stock-broker.

Chardon was not slow in seeing this. He gripped Quinn by the arm, forcing his attention from the door. "Take it easy, man," he urged. "Remember, you're not fit to be on your feet yet. Control yourself. Are you ready?"

"I'm ready," growled Quinn, and moved eagerly forward.

"What——" began Baring, but Chardon silenced him with a gesture.

"You'll see," the adventurer breathed. "Just back us up."

## CHAPTER IX

### CAUGHT

WITHIN a dozen feet of the booth Quinn changed his walk to a swift, noiseless glide, and Chardon followed as silently. Baring tiptoed in the rear, his eyes bent on the sure movements of the detective.

At the door Quinn came stealthily to a complete stop. With painstaking slowness he set his left shoulder gently against it, then, with a sudden marshaling of all the strength in his powerful little body, Micky Quinn burst in the door. With a cry that had something of animal fury in it, he sprang into the narrow booth. Chardon slipped quickly after him, and Baring blocked the doorway.

Within was something very like a tableau. Quintley Fledge sat silent, frozen, in the only chair within the compartment. On the table in front of him was spread out the antique jewelry that had disappeared in the darkness at the Burnadine reception.

But all this Baring took in at a single glance. It was the sight of Surgent—motionless, transfixed, with eyes protruding from his head—that held him. For the contracting hand of Micky Quinn was clutching his brother detective's throat. Quinn's burning eyes were riveted upon the other's face. The whole force of his wiry form was bent to the single purpose of strangling, of destroying utterly, the big body of Alf Surgent.

"Quinn! Stop it!" commanded Chardon tensely. His own slender hands joined Surgent's, which were wrenching with lessening force at the deadly grip on his windpipe.

Slowly something like reason came back into Quinn's murderous eyes. With a sob he released his grip and collapsed against the wall. His hat fell off, and a long patch of white medical tape was revealed on the front of his head.

"You crosser! You dirty blackguard!" Quinn gasped. "Slug your own partner for some rotten jewels! Cross him—ruin his record—for a bit o' cash! Crosser!"

Alf Surgent, choking, fighting for breath, could say nothing, but his black eyes glittered with the venom of a snake's. His right hand moved spasmodically, relaxed, then crept stealthily behind him. But though the eyes of his enemies were dwelling in fascination upon the hate that radiated from his snarling face, the move did not escape Micky Quinn.

"Pull it!" he urged. "Go on, you crosser, draw that gun! I'll give you a start—anything for a chance to let light into that black heart of yours. Go ahead!"

But the hand of Surgent stopped, and involuntarily moved upward over his head before the blasting rage of his former partner. He nodded toward Quintley Fledge and spoke out of a dry, twisted throat:

"He's the guy you want more than me, Micky. He put me up to it—I done it for him."

"Ridiculous!" snapped Quintley Fledge, suddenly coming to life. "I came to know this fellow when he extorted a reward from me in secret after he and this—this Mr. Quinn had succeeded in recovering a bronze ring that had been stolen from me. Later he offered to sell me some ancient jewelry he had picked up. How was I to know that it was——"

"How about that ancient Indian sword I offered to you, Mr. Fledge," interrupted Chardon softly. "Did you think that, too, was not stolen property?"

Fledge wheeled as if Chardon had pushed a knife-blade into his back. He stared at the adventurer. "You, too, a policeman?" he gasped.

"Not quite," corrected Chardon, and he concealed a smile. "But I think you'd better start hiring lawyers as soon as possible. You'll need 'em before you're through."

He turned to Micky, who was still staring savagely at his former partner. "Shall I telephone for the wagon, Micky?"

"I suppose so," conceded Micky grudgingly. "This—this—thing isn't showing no signs of wanting to fight."

"The wagon it is, then," remarked Chardon, and he stepped briskly away as if catching crooks red-handed were his daily duty.

IT WAS not until a police lieutenant and several men came tramping down into the vault and relieved Micky and Baring of their prisoners that Quinn looked around for Chardon. The attendant at the barred gate finally enlightened him.

"He left the vault to telephone, sir, and he hasn't come back," said the flustered guard. "But he gave me this letter and key to one of the safes he rented yesterday, telling me to hand it to Mr. Baring when he was disengaged."

"This may clear things up a bit," Baring said to Quinn.

He handed the key to one of the hovering attendants, with a request to get the box. Baring ripped open the letter. In careless, free-flowing script the envelope was addressed to him. It was dated the previous day.

> MY DEAR BARING [it began]:
> If you receive this, it will mean that my deductions were correct and my plan went through with the proverbial bang. It will also mean that I have deserted the haunts you know, so that you may speak freely to the police if they try to put pressure upon you to disclose my whereabouts. Tell them everything you know and let them read this.

Baring looked up. He discovered Micky Quinn eying the letter with determination.

"Let me read this to you," Baring said hastily. "I have nothing to conceal."

HE READ aloud:

"The solution of the problem proved regrettably easy, although I must confess I am puzzled by Alf Surgent. Is he just an ordinary crook in police clothing, or was his contempt for the perspicacity of his brother officers so great that he was careless about details in planning what was, in many ways, an ingenious crime? At any rate, I have demonstrated that it takes a thief to catch a detective.

"Since I have not been wholly frank with you, I feel that I must not leave you a victim to the gnawing pangs of your curiosity concerning my movements in the case. In the first place, I must inform you that I was always decidedly skeptical concerning that trinket found on the ledge of the open window. That 'clue' impressed me as merely something to amuse the police and keep them busy in one known place while the crook got away with his loot.

"I have already described to you my visit to the Burnadine home in the guise of an electrician. Let it suffice to say that the arrival of Surgent while I was at the apartment disconcerted me, but the fact that I was there also disconcerted him, though he dissembled very cleverly. His attitude set me thinking, and I proceeded to 'discover' my own knife-cut in the lamp cord entirely for his benefit. He was outspoken in his admiration for my cleverness—too outspoken, and I detected a certain feeling of relief when I attributed the light failure to that cause. He did not know that I had already—and privately—discovered that trick bulb. I cleared out with a new theory buzzing in my head.

"My examination of the flashlight while interviewing Micky Quinn led me to frank suspicion of Surgent. What kind of crook would borrow a detective's flashlight, put it out of business by unscrewing the bulb, and then commit a crime in which absolute darkness was a necessary condition? The answer, of course, is that no intelligent criminal would dare to do so.

"If Surgent was not lying in stating that some one had borrowed his flash, then it was a coincidence of a most peculiar kind. I don't believe in any such queer chance. I decided to work on the hypothesis that as Surgent, in the darkness and confusion, called: 'Micky! Better get your flash out!' he stepped away from Phelps Burnadine and brought the heavy flashlight down on his brother detective's head as Micky answered.

"So far, so good. This was possible. Then what? He took the antique bits he was after, of course, and slipped one jewel on the window sill. But the subsequent search of his person, which he demanded, did not disclose his loot. Therefore, he must have concealed the antiques somewhere else. He could not have passed them on to Fledge, for that wily old scoundrel would never have taken such a risk; moreover, Surgent, after the crime became known, was the Cynosure of all eyes for the remainder of the evening. His only chance to conceal them was before the darkness lifted.

"How could he conceal the antiques in those moments of darkness? Remember, he was surrounded by people, barred in by the table, and knew full well that that room would be subjected to the most minute search. Where else, then, could he have hidden them but in the coat-tail pocket of the unconscious Micky Quinn, as he bent over him? Did he not personally assist in lifting Micky to the couch in the alcove, where he took off his coat and loosened his clothes, so that no other hand should come in contact with his loot?

"He was compelled to leave Micky then, but be sure the coat was well out of the way of assisting hands by that time. Discovering me in the elevator with that bulky sword in my trouser-leg was a stroke of luck for Surgent. It furnished diversion for the police and proved his own diligence. I have an idea, however, that he didn't pursue me too fast and that he faked that fall in the snow when I hit him, for he knew that if I escaped no detective would doubt that I had all the loot with me. Further, he assured our escape by poping wildly with his gun to discourage his brother detectives from following.

"Later in the night he accompanied the unconscious Micky to the ambulance, doubtless with Micky's long-tailed coat and overcoat on his arm. Then, after disposing of his loot, he returned, only to be met by you at the corner of Fifth Avenue. I'm not sure he was pleased when that sword fell from your coat, but your efficient fist relieved him of all necessity of staging another unsuccessful chase.

"Knowing, or rather deducing, all this, I did a delicate job of trailing on Surgent this afternoon, at some small risk to myself, since disguise is never more than a fair insurance of remaining unrecognized. However, he was grossly confident, since he was quite sure that none of his colleagues suspected him, and, of course, he could not imagine that a thief was on his trail.

"My quarry led me to a telephone booth from which he called a number. I, listening in the next booth, took it down. Later I found it was Fledge's. That cheered me amazingly.

"The talk was low, guarded and in disguised language which conveyed practically nothing to me, and would have seemed innocent to any other eavesdropper. But when Surgent paid a visit to the basement of his own apartment house, where he has some odd bits of furniture stored, and later led me to a safe deposit vault where he rented a small box, I saw daylight. He had taken the loot from one hiding-place to a better.

"Switching the antiques to Fledge's possession and receiving payment for them would be the safest thing in the world in that underground public, yet very private, place. It eliminated any suspicion of contact between them.

"When this letter is read they will both, I hope, be sadly undeceived. I am writing it at one of my places of refuge, and intend to hurry with it to the vault before it closes—for I too rented a box while I was ascertaining that Surgent had not used his own name in renting his."

Micky Quinn, who had been listening wide-eyed and open-mouthed, caught sight of the attendant returning with the box.

"Let's have a look in here, sir," he suggested.

Baring assented, and watched the detective open the box.

Within it lay the jeweled sword of the ancient prince. Micky Quinn gasped, and the eyes that had been merely wide now bulged in their sockets.

"What the——" he began dumfounded.

"Perhaps the letter will explain," Baring interrupted, and went on:

"I am returning a little souvenir of my visit to the Burnadines, my dear Baring, to prevent any possibility of further embarrassment to you in court or at police headquarters, and also as a salve to your tender conscience. I reserve, of course, the right to repossess the thing at any time that I am sufficiently bored to consider it an interesting job. I hope you will so inform the police. Fair and foul play! What odds do you offer?

"My profuse apologies to Micky Quinn for the knock he received in my darkness. I hope that in pinching his partner and disclosing him as a virulent sort of Judas he will feel compensated therefor. And apologies to you as well, my regrettably honest friend, since I have caused you no little trouble and annoyance, though it is now, I feel confident, quite over. Go back to your office in peace. For me the broad highway and the narrow squeak still beckon.

"ANDREW CHARDON."

BARING silently handed this peculiar statement to Micky Quinn. The detective read it again from the beginning, shaking his head admiringly or frowning darkly as he progressed. Then he handed it back.

"Can you beat that!" he exclaimed. "I thought he was a reporter. Well, better keep this with you until your case is dismissed this afternoon."

He paused; then in a sudden burst of frankness he went on:

"And say, if you should run into this lad again, you tell him from me that I don't want the job of guarding that sword."

# Setting Snow on Fire

AN imposing trick performed by Indian fakirs is to scoop up from the ground a handful of snow, roll it into a ball, and set it on fire. The secret of this is to insert deftly in the ball several pieces of camphor, which look like the surrounding snow, but which will burn merrily.

*He forced his body through the aperture.*

# The Getaway

By JAMES T. NELLIGAN

***Davis had not meant to kill Gerhardt, so the sight of the bloody body held a double terror; for now he was a fugitive from justice. The further away he got from the scene, the greater became his horror and fright, till at last he came back for his punishment—which was just what you wouldn't expect it to be.***

DAVIS placed his hands under the massive shoulders and proceeded to drag the bulky, inert body across the floor. It was a heavy burden for his small, though wiry frame, and when the yacht heeled slightly under the sweep of the Hudson's broad flood, he staggered and almost slipped in a tiny pool which diffused the odor of strong spirits. His foot descended violently upon a tumbler on the floor, and the flinty crackling of breaking glass seemed to splinter the thick, smoke-laden atmosphere.

Puffing and grunting, Davis lurched into the little cabin that opened off the salon and dropped his sodden cargo upon the bed. He crossed the hands over the drink-stained lounging robe, at the same time dazedly wondering why such a maneuver should occur so spontaneously to his swirling brain. Mechanically he straightened out the crazily crooked legs, and then, gingerly lifting the head by its thick, black mop of hair, he shoved a pillow underneath.

There was a dim sensation of something sticky and warm upon his hands. A shudder racked his

body as with fascinated eyes he watched a dark, crimson blotch spread slowly upon the immaculate whiteness of the pillow.

HIS lips babbled some unintelligible protestation, and then he bent low over the still figure, his ear upon the bared breast. Long and intently he listened, in his eyes the horrified incredulity of a drowning man. The ticking of an alarm-clock upon the dresser sounded like the pounding of a heavy mallet.

Suddenly his head came erect with a jerk, seemingly hurled back by some invisible force. Fear and horror were stamped upon every feature of his haggard face: in the eyes, round and protruding; in the veins, which stood out like muscles; in the twitching mouth and bloodless cheeks. He staggered back from the bed and its gruesome burden and threw up his hands, as though to blot out the scene from his mind.

"True—it's true! God help me! A killer! I'm a killer!"

His voice rose gradually to a shriek.

Limp and trembling, he swayed into the outer room and sank into a chair. For a time there was no sound other than the long, shuddering sobs which wrenched his body.

AT LAST he raised a hand wearily to his throbbing head. Cold, clammy beads of sweat jeweled his forehead, and in his ears there kept welling the steady beat of a ponderous hammering. He wondered vaguely where the noise came from, and suddenly realized it was the pulsing of his own heart.

The events of the night paraded before his memory, vague, inchoate, hazy through the fog of liquor fumes which was slowly lifting from his reeling brain. Here and there an incident obtruded itself cameo-like from the general nebulousness, but they were the incidents he would gladly have forgotten.

He cursed bitterly his folly in accepting Gerhardt's invitation. The irony of the situation, too, mocked him—he had been the only one of the five to come against his will, for he cared little for poker, and old experiences had bred in him a fear of liquor, the inevitable accompaniment to Gerhardt's card parties. An evening at the opera would have been far more pleasurable, but what can a man do when a wealthy benefactor insists? The fellow's influence had really made him as a choir singer in the fashionable churches of Gotham. And, then, Gerhardt knew that the wife and the boy were out of town, so what valid excuse had he for refusing?

Incredulous amazement struggled with the tightly drawn lines of his face as he looked upon the wreckage which littered the floor of the room. Papers, cards, chips, glasses, cigarette butts, bottles, strewn indiscriminately upon the table and floor.

"Don't even remember when those fellows left," Davis muttered dazedly. "Didn't know any of them except Tom Bowen and Gerhardt. God! why didn't I go with them? Wonder if they remember that I stayed behind? Maybe they were too drunk to remember that Gerhardt and I started to fight over those damned cards."

To save his soul, he could not remember what words had passed between him and Gerhardt afterward. All he could recall was the other's big frame as it loomed above him, and the twitching fingers at his throat.

A GLINT of something shining under the table caught his eye. He lunged and picked it up. It was a

massive brass candlestick. The blood left his face as memory surged back upon him. There was a sprinkling of dark stains upon the heavy, sharp-cut, circular base. A trembling seized him, so violent that he nearly dropped the thing. Hastily he laid it upon the table in his eagerness to be rid of it.

"Poor Gerhardt!" he groaned. "Lord! That would bash in the skull of an ox!"

SUDDENLY his body stiffened in an attitude of tense alertness. From somewhere outside the door of the salon there came a sound, an odd, swishing noise like the rubbing of two sheets of paper.

Davis glanced frantically around and darted toward the shadowy sleeping cabin. But as quickly he withdrew, when his gaze fell upon the bed. With racing heart he waited.

Swish, swish . . . slow and regular, the sound came closer, and then outside the door it stopped. For a full minute there was silence.

Davis felt himself swaying weakly.

Then came a sharp knock.

Davis put his hand over his heart to smother the sound of its beating.

A voice tremulous and muffled by the thick oaken door broke the tension.

"Mr. Gerhardt, anything wrong in there?" It was the old watchman. Davis had forgotten him.

For a moment he thought of remaining silent in the hope that the man would go back to his duties. But suppose he didn't?

With a rather flat imitation of Gerhardt's sonorous base, Davis answered: "No, Tom, of course not."

"Funny! Thought I heard some one groaning a little while ago."

Davis added a touch of asperity to his tenuous basso this time. "Tom, you're hearing things. Going to bed now, so don't bother me with any more of your crazy stories."

"All right, Mr. Gerhardt. Guess you're right. Must've been something on that police-boat that went by a few minutes ago. The old ears are getting tricky, I guess. Sorry."

HIS shuffling footsteps died away as he mounted the companionway to the deck. But to Davis' tortured mind there was a lack of sincerity in those last words, a lingering note of suspicion that spurred him into instant action.

A small washroom opened off the forward end of the salon. Entering this, Davis carefully examined and then brushed his clothing. Queer little shivers chased up and down his spine as he noticed the stains upon his hands. With meticulous care he laved and rinsed them. In the toilet cabinet he found Gerhardt's razor. For a moment he stood gazing into the mirror at his taut, well-groomed face, clean-shaven except for a raven-black, trim-cut mustache. Then, with a muttered "Here goes!" he applied the lather. A few trembling strokes of the razor, and Davis looked upon a strangely different, yet familiar face.

He returned to the salon and surveyed the port-hole calculatingly. It was about five feet from the floor and somewhat over a foot in diameter—a tight squeeze even for a man of his proportions.

THE natural means of exit would be to go on deck and then row ashore in the small tender to the boat landing off 125th Street. But to a man fleeing from the secret of that still, motionless thing below this was too hazardous. He'd surely encounter the watchman above, and he doubted seriously the gullibility of the old fellow. Every minute, every second, was precious now. It

was not safe to take chances. If he could withhold discovery for a few hours, there was a chance of escape. He looked at his watch. It was three-thirty.

His green slicker was crumpled in one corner of the room. He spread it carefully upon the floor, stepped upon it, and stripped himself of every article of clothing until he stood naked.

Gerhardt's silver flask glistened upon the table. Davis looked at it hesitatingly, then, with a shrug of his shoulders, grasped it, raised it to his lips, and took a deep swallow.

It might lend some measure of assurance to those fearfully shaky nerves of his. The flask was still more than a quarter full, and he dropped it into the heap of clothing, which he rolled into a compact bundle, wrapping the slicker about the whole and using as twine two bath-robe cords.

Impelled by a strange fascination, he stole to the door of the other room and peered within. He had extinguished the light here before, but in the shadowy illumination cast by the light of the salon he could descry the vague outline of the motionless figure on the bed. It looked like some crudely cut effigy upon the marble whiteness of the counterpane. To his fevered imagination, it seemed that the body had grown to gigantic proportions and that there was a mocking grin on the ghastly face, as though to say: "Come, Davis, no more of this nonsense! You're done. You can't get away, you know."

Davis shuddered and hastily returned to the welcome light of the outer room. He gave one final glance of appraisal at his preparations. A last precaution occurred to him, and he went to the door leading to the deck, tried it, found it locked as he expected, and stealthily inserted the key.

"That'll hold them for a few minutes, anyway," he muttered.

WITHOUT further delay he attached a string to the bundle of clothing and strode to the porthole. He stood upon a chair, placing the free end of the string in his teeth, and pushed out the awkward package. Then, with much squirming and struggling, he forced his body through the aperture and dropped with a plop into the icy waters of the Hudson.

Holding the clothing upon the surface with one hand, he struck out vigorously with the other toward the low black streak of shore-line. He sputtered a soft benediction on his natatorial ability and even more ardently on his concealment of the fact.

A gorgeously tattooed forearm, pride of early vagabond days, had in the later years of his affluence proved a boomerang, a shameful thing, something to be hidden. So it was that Davis was known among his friends as an athletic sort of chap who could not swim a stroke and had not the least desire to don a bathing suit. He felt relieved at the thought. They'd probably think that in a fit of remorse at his deed he had taken his own life by jumping into the river.

THE plunge into the frigid water had shocked him into complete sobriety and with this came a partial restoration of self-confidence. His arm and legs, driving regularly and easily like well-oiled pistons, had brought him nearly half-way to his goal when a peculiar sound that he had only dimly sensed for some moments became undeniably evident. Over the river, like the harsh, staccato litany of a steam-riveter, came

winging the "put-put" of a speeding gasoline launch.

Like a flash the dread suspicion came to him. The police boat! An icy tentacle seemed to grip his heart as he recalled the note of skepticism in the old watchman's voice.

He struck out frantically and noisily in the desperate hope of outracing the coughing Nemesis. Louder and louder it zoomed over the racing flood of the river. He knew now that it was coming in his direction.

And then in a moment when he was coughing out a mouthful of evil-tasting river water, his bloodshot eyes glimpsed the dark mass as it leaped out of the blacker darkness which was all around him.

It was only a large launch, but to the panic-stricken man it loomed like a battleship out of the water. On her deck four or five figures moved like ominous spectres.

Goaded to a veritable frenzy of fear, the swimmer threw all precaution aside in a mad attempt to reach that nebulous streak of shore-line. He clung tenaciously to the precious bundle of clothing, but his free arm and legs flayed the water like miniature steam paddles.

There was a sudden scurrying among the figures on the boat, now not more than thirty feet away. A hoarse voice barked a command. Davis checked his frantic efforts and silently trod water. He wanted now to answer, to tell them who he was, to surrender, for he could endure the agony no longer; but his tongue was paralyzed with terror.

Then, abruptly, there was a burst of flame on the launch, a sharp report like the crack of a whip lashed his ears, and against the water nearby there came the zip of a bullet.

A piercing cry unloosed the fetters of his tongue, and he burst into a babble of language. "Stop, for God's sake! Don't shoot again! I surrender!"

The answer was a veritable fusillade of shots in the direction of his squirming body.

Davis' voice rose in crescendo of supplication. "God! You fools, put up the guns! You're shooting at a helpless man! I surrender, I tell you!"

He made a furious lunge toward the boat to get under the shelter of her swelling sides. But with the salvo the launch, rounding to her helm, swerved sharply toward midstream. The drone of her engine speedily merged with the brooding stillness of the night.

The voice that came from her deck as she swung about seemed to linger in her wake for a few moments like the mocking tones of a siren:

"Beg pardon, buddy. Thought there was some prohibition folks near us. Funny time to take a bath."

FIVE minutes later a limp, panting object dragged itself upon the shore with slow, leaden movements of arms and legs. For long minutes it lay sodden and inert upon the wave-licked stones without movement or sound save for the deep, sobbing sighs of tortured lungs.

At 125th Street Davis hailed a cruising taxicab. He gave an address a block south of his home in the East Sixties, and sank back wearily into the hard cushions. In spite of the depressing fear which was slowly sapping his confidence, he could not help felicitating himself on his foresight. His clothing was dry, thanks to the slicker. He had hurled the latter into the river after reaching the shore, noting with misgiving that it must have landed on a bit of driftwood, as it did not sink. Yes, that had been a fortunate thought—the slicker. A man in

dripping clothes at four A. M. would certainly make even a sophisticated taxi driver roll his eyes.

Notwithstanding his efforts at self-assurance, Davis thought he detected a quizzical expression on the heavy-jowled face of the chauffeur as he handed him a five-dollar bill and, without waiting for change, strode off in a direction opposite to that of his home.

When the purr of the machine died out as it swung into Fifth Avenue, he retraced his steps. The echo of his feet along the deserted street engendered queer fancies, and his pace quickened almost into a run as he gave quick glances backward.

HE WAS rounding the corner of Madison Avenue into his own block when his eye caught the uncertain outline of a moving figure against the shadows of the buildings opposite. His overwrought imagination conjured up a picture of a lurking policeman, and he darted from the sidewalk to crouch in the protecting lee of a building set in from the street. The figure opposite held for a moment to the shadows and then passed waveringly into the full glare of the street lamp at the intersection. Davis' racing pulse slowly subsided as he appraised the tipsy gait of the Tuxedo-clad wayfarer.

"Some late bird from the night clubs," he muttered with a sigh of relief.

There was a slight mist in the air, and through its filmy texture the street lights glowed eerily upon the lone, slinking figure which clung wraith-like to the shelter of the buildings that lined the street. It was cold, too, with that clammy chilliness which precedes the dawn of spring mornings. So Davis curled his hands in his coat-sleeves, and hunched his shoulders and sidled along like a queerly misproportioned ape. He was close to home now and was nervous lest he meet some one who might know him.

"Lord! What an ordeal!" he groaned under his breath. "If I thought it would always be this way, I'd give myself up now."

"JUST a minute!"

Like a top Davis was spun around on his heels. The muscles of his shoulder quivered as though pinched in a huge nut-cracker. Out of the shadows of a brown-stone front an arm protruded, rigid, immovable as a piling.

A cry, animal-like in its commingling of sudden pain and fear, quivered on the lips of the startled man.

"Squeal away, brother. Sounds like a rat in a tight corner."

Davis made a frantic but futile effort to free himself. The vise-like fingers bit deeper, and the pulsing agony in his shoulder became almost unbearable.

The first shock of the encounter had so paralyzed his senses that he had hardly seen his assailant. Now, swung face to face with him, he glimpsed through bulbous eyes the silver sheen of badge and gilded buttons. A whimper of hysterical terror tumbled from his open mouth, and Davis sagged like a limp rag.

Vaguely, as in a dream, he could feel his body swing to and fro under the ruthless pressure of herculean arms.

"Blast you, snap out of that! What's your game, eh? Dodging around here when every honest man is in bed. Come on, now, no more of this bluff. Up on your feet, while I call the wagon."

But Davis, with the words ringing in his ears like a knell, sagged lower in the arms of the policeman.

The officer, anger and perplexity in his voice, shook him with renewed

vigor. "What the devil is the matter with you, bozo? Are you drunk?"

LIKE a shot the idea struck home in Davis' head and dispelled the deadening opiate of fear which had clouded his wits. He swayed drunkenly to his feet. His lips opened in a maudlin chuckle. Raising his hand, he brought it down with a resounding whack upon the officer's back.

"Bit unshteady on m' feet, off'ser. Beg pardon, takin' rest in y'r arms. Been out late, jus' little unshteady. But 'm goin' home now. Get night's shleep. Glad to meet ya, off'ser. All right y' are, yessir. Y're my shtyle, off'ser."

A sententious smile was slowly wreathing the face of the policeman.

"Maybe you don't need *my* wagon, laddie, but you sure need some kind of a vehicle."

Davis uttered a silly laugh. He lurched against the bluecoat and breathed into his face. The latter wrinkled his nose and sniffed knowingly.

"Smells as though you'd swallowed a coupla renderin' plants!" he growled.

Davis felt that he was making encouraging progress. Simulating the ridiculously confidential tones of the intoxicated, he whispered in the other's ear: "Say, off'ser, ya won' believe, but's true I'm afraid to go home, unshteady like this. 'Fraid of the wife. Ya won' b'lieve me. Gotta deshtroy the ev'dence." He reached into a hip pocket and held up Gerhardt's silver flask. "C'mon, now, swallow thish ev'dence, 'n' then I c'n go home."

The policeman chuckled. "Good idea, brother! I'll take the evidence an' the brief-case, too." He thrust out his hand and snatched the flask from the reluctant fingers of the smaller man.

Davis started to protest. "Beg pardon, off'ser. Gimme back the flask. Thass 'n ol' family heirloom."

"Never mind, old-timer, I'll take good care of it. You can meet the wife now without any worry. You ain't got any evidence now except a breath that would make a whale turn over."

He swung Davis around and roughly pushed him away.

Davis hesitated, then, realizing the futility of further protest, staggered away, bitter self-recrimination in his heart.

"Oh, what's the use? Might just as well have introduced myself to him as to have left that flask behind with Gerhardt's name on it."

THE house, unoccupied for three days, was deserted and gloomily silent. Even the lone servant, George, a colored factotum, was absent at the funeral of an aged parent in some backwoods hamlet of Maryland.

Davis switched on the hall lights.

"Queer sort of luck to have them all out at a time like this," he soliloquized. "God knows, I don't see how I could face any of them just now. Wonder if I ever will?" he concluded with a quaver in his voice.

He peered into the formless shadows of the dining-room. The massive table in its center took on a queer, ghastly outline. Davis shivered.

"Lord, looks like a morgue!" he muttered, as he snapped on the light. "Never thought any place could be so still."

SUDDENLY, searing his jangling nerves like the thrust of a branding-iron, came a shrill, strident ringing. Davis started as though he had touched a live wire; his heart gave one long leap and

stopped for what seemed an eternity. Then, floundering, stumbling, careless of furniture, he plunged through the room in a mad dash for the rear exit. Half-way he checked himself. The noise had stopped for a moment and then begun again. But this time he recognized its source.

It was the telephone buzzer, a fact not wholly reassuring by any means, but still it was not the front door-bell, as he had thought at first. He didn't have to answer the telephone. A strange time to be calling a private residence. But he'd surely have to hurry now and make every moment count.

To the accompaniment of an intermittent, ominous ringing in the other room, he made a rapid search of a roll-top desk in his study. Under a mass of papers he found a railroad time-table. Turning the pages hastily, shakily, he learned that there was a train leaving the Grand Central Station for Montreal within an hour. Though he tried to ascertain the hour of arrival at Montreal, his hands were so unsteady that he could not follow the elusive lines of the train schedule. With a pencil he underlined the table in the column opposite the name of that city. The journey would take approximately twelve hours.

"Mustn't leave this behind," he observed as he laid the time-table on the desk.

The maddening buzz of the telephone wrung a stream of frenzied oaths from his lips.

A furious ransacking of closets provided a change of clothing, which he jammed into a black traveling bag. In a small safe in his study he found three hundred dollars—all the ready cash he had in the world.

He was about to snap the bag tight, preparatory to going, when his glance was caught by a photograph resting upon the mantelpiece over the fireplace. Tears welled in his eyes as he pressed it convulsively to his lips. It was a picture of his wife and his son, a boy in his first 'teens.

A great sob broke from him. "Oh, Bobby boy, can you ever forgive me?"

He seemed suddenly to have grown years older, and his shoulders sagged perceptibly as he deposited the picture tenderly in a pocket of his coat.

THE telephone shrilled again, sharply, impatiently.

Grasping the bag, he hastened through the dining-room, extinguishing the lights as he went. His hat was on a rack in the hall above the telephone. He lunged to grasp it, lost his balance, and sprawled upon the telephone stand.

The instrument toppled to the floor, and Davis, as he recovered his feet, heard with dismay the clicking which denoted a closed circuit. That persistent and mysterious party at the other end would know now that the house was not entirely void of human presence. Was it wiser to answer or to go? Wouldn't it be better now to know if they were already baying on his trail? If he didn't reply, the fact would certainly spur them on, Davis deliberated with sinking heart.

"Hello! Hello!" He could even hear the voice faintly. His bag dropped to the floor, and Davis picked up the phone.

"Hello! Is this Davis' residence?"

"Uh-huh."

"That you, Jim? This is Tom Bowen. Where in blazes have you been? I'm in tough——"

"Mr. Davis is not here," he inter-

rupted, biting his words with assumed asperity.

"What's that? Davis not there? He *ought* to be home now. Who's that—George?"

"Yes, suh," Davis mimicked, grasping the cue.

"Funny that Mr. Davis isn't home yet. Is Mrs. Davis there?"

"No, suh; Missus Davis went away, too." Davis could feel himself growing hot and sweaty as he tried to divine the purport of this questioning.

"All alone, eh? Say, George, I'm in tough luck."

"That so?" Davis' voice trailed away in uneasy anticipation of the sequel.

"Yes, I'm at the 104th Street Police Station. I've been arrested."

"Oh, my God!" Davis almost dropped the phone. "What—what's the matter?" he stammered, white-faced and trembling.

"Oh, I got pulled in for drunken driving. And say, George——"

"Yes?"

"I've got to get bail. Don't want to call home. Mr. Davis'll be in soon. I want him to bail me. I'm sending a friend over to get him. Tell him to step on it."

"But listen—listen—no, no! I'm not—Mr. Davis is not home."

"That's all right. You told me that once. You just do as I say when he comes in." There was a final click as the speaker hung up.

Davis seized his bag, jammed his hat upon his head, and, oblivious of the hall light still burning, dashed out of the house.

AT THE Grand Central Station he purchased a ticket for Montreal via Springfield. No Pullman chairs were available, so he had to content himself with a seat in a day coach. The vast waiting-room of the station seemed almost deserted, though there were some hundreds waiting for trains.

During the few minutes which preceded the opening of the train gates, Davis paced nervously back and forth. When a porter stepped suddenly from behind, he started at the unexpected sight of the uniform and snarled a brusque refusal to the man's proffer of service. A policeman came strolling in his direction. At the same time the gates slid open.

Davis led the procession of impatient travelers.

He took a seat, the rear one in the forward day coach, and huddled close to the window. Until the train started he crouched there, glancing furtively now at the platform, now at the door behind him.

THE train roared out of the city and into the rolling meadows of Westchester and Connecticut. Like beads on the unwavering string of the railroad, little villages and towns swam airily by the speeding express.

But Davis cursed it for its slowness.

One, two, three . . . he counted the stations as they raced by his window. A fine diversion! But it didn't last long. The train was too slow. New Haven seemed hours away, and as for Springfield, St. Albans, Montreal — the millennium would arrive sooner!

A little, squirming bug of a man he was, fidgeting and twitching like an insect transfixed by a pin.

Then he discovered the loss of the time-table, the marked time-table stupidly forgotten at home.

"Oh, you ass!" he hissed between gritted teeth. "Why didn't you leave your itinerary there, too? Oh, this is the perfect murder, all right!"

At New Haven there was a lengthy wait while engines were being changed. Davis fingered his watch and cocked his eye warily toward the door each time a passenger entered. After long minutes came the bump of the steam engine ahead. Another wait and then the quaint intonation of the warning cry, "All aboard!" Never had words sounded sweeter to Davis' ears. He moistened his lips and breathed a soft "Whew!" of relief, then sank gingerly back into his seat.

One more hurdle cleared!

THERE was a sudden stir in a group of freight handlers near the far exit from the waiting-room. A figure detached itself from their midst—a huge, towering mountain of a man.

Davis' pulse quickened. Through slitted eyes he watched and marveled at the massive proportions and the fleetness of foot which the giant displayed. It seemed incredible that human legs could drive that mass of flesh and bone so swiftly.

The train was in motion and fast gathering headway. Davis, for some reason, felt uneasy, and hoped that the man would not make it.

But he did.

His feet thrummed the trembling platform in a last powerful spurt. Racing alongside, he swung aboard the very car from which Davis had watched with mingled feelings his amazed dash.

A shadow darkened the doorway. Davis glanced back. There the huge man stood motionless, except for eyes of Stygian hue that darted restlessly from passenger to passenger. His vast shoulders choked the entrance, so that Davis wondered how he could get in without turning sidewise. A fierce black mustache like the facial adornment of a walrus and a square, craggy jaw served to accentuate his formidable appearance. Their glances met and Davis' eyes blinked—then dropped. The man had the cold, baleful, flickerless stare of a cobra.

Davis hurriedly turned his attention again to the window and began to bite his finger-nails. The big fellow had not moved. Davis felt that he was still staring, and it wasn't a pleasant sensation. It was like trying to turn your back nonchalantly on a rogue elephant.

There was a tense, uncomfortable wait of a minute or so, and then there came the squeak of springs in sudden protest. The man was slowly settling himself into the seat opposite. There were a number of empty seats farther forward, yet he chose this one, obviously uncomfortable for a man of his build. It was smaller than the other seats, because of the structure of the car at that end.

The point did not escape Davis' attention.

He tried to laugh at his fears, but he didn't quite succeed. The only result was a succession of ridiculous faces.

Bah! The thing to do was to forget it. Do something else. He was getting childish. He began determinedly to admire the verdant spring beauty of the landscape. If physical concentration was a criterion, he appeared to succeed for five minutes. Then the loveliness of hill and dale seemed to slip out of sight and out of mind.

THERE was no use in dissembling. Davis was ill-at-ease. He rubbed his hands nervously across his face. His feet did a quick tattoo on the floor. From time to time he licked his lips. He crossed his legs and uncrossed them, and then dug his feet so deeply into the seat in

front that its occupant turned around with a look of mild protest.

Davis mumbled an apology, then shot a lightning glance across the aisle. The giant was openly watching him, a queer, quizzical look in his eye.

A moment later a brakeman came through. Glancing at Davis, he stopped and asked him if he were sick.

"Mind your own business!" came the rejoinder in a tired, resentful voice.

Once he tried an experiment. Rising from his seat, he went to the other end of the car, ostensibly for a drink of water. With the paper receptacle poised as a shield, he turned around and looked back.

The big man was leaning outward, peering down the aisle.

Davis didn't dare look in that direction as he lurched back to his seat.

In desperation, he ransacked his bag for something to read. All he could find was an old program of the Metropolitan Opera Company. He turned the pages listlessly, hardly seeing them.

A cavernous cough from the opposite seat brought his head up with a jerk. He could have gibbeted that hulking mammoth with pleasure. The searing black eyes were fastened upon him with rapt interest.

Davis jammed the program into the bag again, leaned back, rumpled his hair, and then fumbled in his coat pocket. There might be something to read there—a letter, a newspaper clipping, anything. His fingers were fluttering like a bit of cloth in a gale of wind. He pulled out a sheaf of letters. One of them slipped from his shaky clutch and dropped into the aisle.

He made a quick dart to retrieve it, but not quick enough. A hand like the paw of a gorilla closed around it.

"You dropped this?"

DAVIS was the color of pasty chalk. The fellow was actually reading the address. Davis took back the envelope without a word, more like an automaton than a sentient human being. The letters were squeezed tightly in his hand, and he stared at them with a stupid expression on his face.

"You're interested in music, Mr. Davis?"

Davis had hardly felt the hand on his shoulder. His neighbor, without a word of apology, was sliding ponderously into his own seat. It was like putting a foot into a new shoe.

"Yes." The word winged from his mouth almost unconsciously. His sagging spine straightened like a suddenly released spring.

"Well, then, *I'm* interested in *you*. By the way, my name's MacLellan. Maybe you've heard of me?"

"No."

"No?" The big man gave a chuckle that ended abruptly, as though it had caught in his throat. "Well, no harm. It's likely that you'll hear a great deal of me in the near future."

"Yes?" Davis rejoined with a little catch in his voice.

"Sure thing! It won't be my fault if you don't. It's just a matter of waiting a bit. Nothing like a little patience, eh, Davis?" Another abortive chuckle, and the hand on Davis' shoulder squeezed unmercifully.

Davis gulped and chewed his lip spasmodically. "I—I presume that's right. But really, sir, I don't quite understand what you're—you're—driving at?"

"Well, never mind. You will. Do you sing, Davis?" The question

came as abruptly as a thunderclap.

Again he was caught off his guard, and the words were out of his mouth before he could check himself.

"Yes—that is, I do—a little, just a little."

"Song-bird! I knew it! And I'll wager you're a tenor?"

Davis gave a frightened nod. Once when he was a boy he had seen a rat in a cage trap. That was the picture that flashed through his mind as MacLellan's heavy hand squeezed his shoulder again. He pulled away toward the window.

"Why do you want to know, may I ask?" It was the cornered rat in a new rôle now. He was suddenly resentful.

"Why? Well, Davis, all my life I've been interested in birds, but—you'll laugh at this—in just two kinds: song-birds and jailbirds. Strange combination, isn't it? And I'm somewhat of a song-bird myself. How far are you going?"

But the question went unanswered. Davis was already on his feet, scrambling over the other's sprawling legs.

"Pardon me, I'm going back to the smoker."

HE DROPPED into a seat near the door of the smoking-car, thrust a cigar into his mouth, and chewed savagely without thinking to light it.

The jolting of the brakes on the wheels startled him into consciousness of his surroundings. He looked out to see the train slowing into the station at Springfield. There was a milling, jostling throng of people on the platform. His eyes sped from face to face.

Then suddenly he paled and shrank back from the window. Close to the tracks stood a tall, silvery-haired man in the uniform of a police lieutenant. He was scanning the passing cars intently, obviously watching for some one.

Davis jumped from his seat and made for the exit nearby. If he could get into that close-packed mob outside, he'd be safe for a while, at least. To remain on the train would be fatal if a search were made. There was one man ahead of him, standing on the steps of the car. Davis cursed audibly and was almost tempted to push him off. He looked around desperately. There was MacLellan stepping on to the vestibule of the car adjoining. He said something inaudible and started toward Davis.

The latter whirled. His pocket caught in a protruding iron bar and came away with a rip. He plunged back into the crowded aisle of the smoking-car, pushing, stumbling, trampling, to gain the other exit. A maelstrom of tumbling passengers and a shower of oaths attended his stormy progress.

One man, knocked sprawling into a seat, arose sputtering with rage and landed a violent blow on his retreating back. But neither blows nor oaths could stop Davis. He wriggled through the last cursing obstruction and leaped to the ground. In a moment he was swallowed up in the crowd, a veritable scarecrow of a man, with torn pocket flapping, tie awry, hair dishevelled, eyes popping like rivet heads.

WHAT to do next he did not know. To remain where he was would soon invite attention to his disordered appearance. And yet he felt that it was not safe to board the train. While the crowd slowly lessened he stood near an iron girder, ceaselessly alert for the glint of a uniform or the formidable bulk of his late companion, MacLellan.

Then he heard the sharp, warning puff of the engine, the clang of the bell. The train was pulling out, and with it Davis' last hope. He looked on for a moment, fists clenched until the blood came; then he started toward the waiting-room.

Almost instantly he came to an abrupt stop. Not twenty feet away, over the field of bobbing heads, he glimpsed an elephantine form approaching. MacLellan! He was in animated conversation with the elderly police official, and they apparently had not seen him.

Davis spun on his heels like a gyroscope and ran for the train. A pile of baggage was in his way, but he cleared it with a prodigious leap. The train was rumbling past at a fairly good speed. He could see that in an interval measured by seconds the last car would glide by to mock his impotence unless he could summon up some unfathomed reserve of physical endurance.

His teeth clashed in grim desperation. Now or never! Head far back, he fairly flung himself at the car. One hand struck out wildly. With a jolt that tore at every muscle in his body, it closed around the cold steel of the hand-bar. He felt that a span of horses could not loosen that convulsive grip.

PAINFULLY he dragged himself upon the first step, his breath coming in short, hoarse gasps. For a moment he rested, then looked back. Upon the swiftly receding platform stood a group of people staring after him. In the forefront towered MacLellan, beside him the police lieutenant.

"Close shave, that."

The voice, coming unexpectedly, frightened Davis so that he nearly lost his hold.

"Close shave, yes. I ought to be used to them now." His tone was resentful, and he almost glared at the brakeman on the platform beside him.

"Suppose you were talking to the big fellow. Do you know who he is?"

"No. What difference does it make?"

"Not much, I guess, except that he's the new operatic find. Just signed a fat contract in New York. The whole town here's pretty proud of him. That was his father—the copper. He's an ex-copper himself. Funny duffer, too. Like a bull in a china shop. Got about as much tact as a head-hunter."

DAVIS brushed past him without a word. Somehow he found his old seat, though he walked like a man in a trance. Slumped in the corner like a tired child, he neither saw nor heard anything while the train raced on for hours, through one State and into another. His own thoughts were too engrossing.

He reviewed the blunders that marked almost every step he had taken since that moment hours—it seemed like years — hours back, when he had plunged into the Hudson. A child could follow a trail like that. But the most stupid act of all—this last affair, this fellow MacLellan, the singer, ex-cop, too—that was irony. This MacLellan had not only his name but his address. Probably the wires were burning at that very moment.

A woman with a child entered the train at Brattleboro. The youngster glanced at Davis in passing and shrank close to his mother. Clutching her hand, he piped in an audible treble: "Oh, ma, look at the drunken man."

THE ticket-agent at St. Albans looked wearily at the wall clock and cursed its loud, unhurried ticking. Seven o'clock.

"Oh, Lord!" he sighed. "Why wasn't I born rich instead of handsome?"

Except for a handful of employees, the station was deserted. A few minutes before, the Montreal Express had discharged and embarked its small quota of travelers with the usual hurry and bustle. There was nothing but work now to break the lonely vigil until the southbound train came through at 10:10. Being a gregarious sort of person, the ticket-agent suffered keenly during these hours of involuntary isolation.

He jammed his elbow upon the desk and thrust his chin vindictively into his hand.

"I'll never set 'em on their ears in this cursed one-horse burg! Big-town stuff is the only thing that'll bring me out." It was pleasant to confide this way with oneself.

THE outer door creaked and swung inward. The ticket agent did not deign a glance. One of the town cuspidor-shooters, probably.

An apologetic cough at the ticket window dispelled his indifference. He looked up resentfully. A face haggard and pale was peering through the grillework.

"How about the trains to New York?" There was a tired flatness in the low voice.

"How 'bout them? What do you want to know? Their color or their weight, or maybe their passenger capacity?" This small, white-faced stranger looked like a safe target for his flippancy.

"Just when does the next train leave for New York City?" The mincing inflection warned the agent that he might have gone too far.

"Yes, sir," he answered placatingly. "Beg pardon. I didn't understand your question. The express for New York leaves here at 10:10. About a three-hour wait. Ticket, sir?"

"A three-hour wait? Ye gods! You might just as well say three years!"

"Sure is a tough grind. One-horse town, too, you know. Nothing to do except belt the sidewalks, and they take them in at nine o'clock. Will you have a ticket? Wish I was going your way."

"A ticket? I suppose so. Don't know, though. Maybe I'm a fool. Ten-ten? I'll think it over. I may be back. Guess I *am* a fool."

"*Maybe* you're a fool? No doubt at all. I know you are," mused the agent as the forlorn figure stumbled out of the door. "Wish I had a chance to take the train for New York. There'd be no 'maybe' about it."

He turned back to his desk resignedly.

Ten minutes later he scrawled the last word on a report sheet. He poised the pen triumphantly, about to lay it down for a moment's relaxation, when a shiver ran up his back.

Through the window came in familiar, lifeless tones: "I'll take a ticket to New York on that ten-ten."

THE captain at Police Headquarters looked up questioningly from the blotter. A house officer stood before him. Against the frame of the open door slouched a man in civilian attire, hat in hand — a bedraggled-looking creature, eyes aflame from lack of sleep, clothes wrinkled and soiled from cigarette ashes.

The officer jerked an indifferent thumb in his direction, explaining: "Man here on the Gerhardt case, captain."

The captain looked the visitor over with an air of professional

appraisal. Apparently satisfied, he beckoned to him to approach. The man straightened himself listlessly, shambled across the floor, and stood before the official, his unwavering gaze leveled at the top of the high desk.

"Well, sir, what have you to tell us?" the captain questioned crisply.

"I'm sorry I didn't come right away and tell the whole story." The voice was as spiritless as the drone of a croupier.

"That's always the better way," encouraged the captain.

"Captain, I've been living in a hell ever since I looked on that bloody body. An awful-looking sight!" His shoulders twitched involuntarily.

"You've seen the body?"

"God! How could I help it?"

"Then there's nothing left for Gerhardt but low lights and soft music, thanks to you."

"I know it, captain, but don't rub it in. It's tough enough, isn't it?"

THE captain's eyes narrowed quizzically. His gaze ranged the other again, slowly, from head to foot.

"What's your name, mister?" he queried abruptly.

"Davis—James P. Davis. It might just as well be Bluebeard now."

"Davis, eh? I see."

The captain glanced at the policeman standing near and nodded a significant gesture toward an inner door of the office. The bluecoat disappeared through the door.

"You're quite sure, Mr. Davis, that you know all about this case?"

"Captain, don't play with me like that." His eyes for a moment flared indignantly into the other's face. "I'm honest with you. Do whatever you've got to do with me, but don't toy with me as though I were a mouse!"

The plea went unheeded.

"Do you know where the body is?"

"You police are brutes! How could I help knowing?" Davis' voice was rising.

"Whose body?"

"Gerhardt's, of course." He fairly flung the answer into the captain's teeth.

THE inner door of the office swung open. On the threshold stood the policeman, and beside him, handcuffed to his wrist, was a big man, his head swathed in bandages like a turbaned Turk.

The captain smiled, stepped from his rostrum, and gripped Davis' arm. The latter held out his wrist mechanically.

But the captain swung him around, and in a voice obviously melodramatic said: "Sorry, Mr. Davis, but you're all wrong. There's the body, a pretty live one too, of the aforementioned Mr. Gerhardt, self-confessed murderer of J. P. Davis, for whose remains the police are still searching."

There was a dull, plopping sound. The captain looked around. Davis was crumpled into an odd, shapeless-looking thing at his feet.

The captain motioned to the policeman: "Some water." Then, turning to the other man, whose ghastly face was working with emotions which he made no effort to control, he added: "Mr. Gerhardt, the next time you and Davis start out to kill each other, please do a better job. It'll save the police a lot of trouble."

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

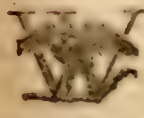
Original sketch by W. L. Thomas from a photograph; used by permission of George H. Doran Company

# Houdini, the Enigma

By SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

*Houdini, master magician, always insisted that his tricks had perfectly natural, though esoteric, explanations. But Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who first gained fame as the creator of Sherlock Holmes, advances in this and the succeeding article the startling theory that Houdini, the famous medium-baiter, was in reality himself a remarkable medium, consciously or unconsciously. Whether or not Spiritualism means anything to you, you will surely be interested in what Sir Arthur has to say.*

PART I



WHO was the greatest medium-baiter of modern times? Undoubtedly Houdini. Who was the greatest physical medium of modern times? There are some of us who would be inclined to give the same answer. I do not see how it can ever now be finally and definitely proved, but circumstantial evidence may be very strong, as Thoreau said when he found a trout in the milk-jug. I foresee that the subject will be debated for many years to come, so perhaps my opinion, since I knew him well and always entertained this possibility in my mind, may be of interest.

I will first give some of my own personal impressions of Houdini. I will then dwell on some phases of his career which show his singular character, and endeavor to give the argument as to the source of his unique powers.

Let me say in the first instance that in a long life which has touched every side of humanity I have never encountered a more curious and intriguing character than Houdini. I have met better men, and I have certainly met many worse ones, but I have never met a man who had such strange contrasts in his nature, and whose actions and motives it was more difficult to foresee or to reconcile.

I WILL first, as is only proper, dwell upon the great good which lay in his nature. He had the essential masculine quality of courage to a supreme degree. Nobody has ever done, and nobody in all human probability will ever do, such reckless feats of daring. His whole life was one long succession of them, and when I say that among them was the leaping from one airplane to another with handcuffed hands at the height of three thousand feet, one can form an idea of the extraordinary lengths to which he would go. In this, however, as in much more that concerned him, there was a certain psychic element which he was ready freely to admit. He told me that a voice which was indepen-

dent of his own reason or judgment told him what to do and how to do it. As long as he obeyed the voice he was assured of safety. "It all comes as easy as stepping off a log," said he to me, "but I have to wait for the voice. You stand there before a jump, swallowing the yellow stuff that every man has in him. Then at last you hear the voice, and you jump. Once I jumped on my own, and I nearly broke my neck." This was the nearest admission that I ever had from him that I was right in thinking that there was a psychic element which was essential to every one of his feats.

APART from his amazing courage, he was remarkable for his cheery urbanity in everyday life. One could not wish a better companion as long as one was with him, though he might do and say the most unexpected things when one was absent. He was like most Jews, estimable in his family relationships. His love for his dead mother seemed to be the ruling passion of his life. This he expressed on all sorts of public occasions in a way which was, I am sure, sincere, but which is strange to our colder Western blood. He was devoted also to his wife, and with good reason, for she is a woman of a rare type, but again his intimacy showed itself in unconventional ways. When in his examination before the Senatorial Committee he was hard-pressed by some defender of Spiritualism who impugned his motives in his violent and vindictive campaign against mediums, his answer was to turn to his wife and to say: "I have always been a good boy, have I not?"

Another favorable side of his character was his charity. I have not had any direct evidence of this, but I have heard, and am quite prepared to believe, that he was the last refuge of the down-and-outer, especially if he belonged to his own profession of showman.

So much for his virtues—and most of us would be very glad to have as goodly a list. But all he did was extreme and there was something to be placed on the other side of the scale.

A PREVAILING feature of his character was a vanity which was so obvious and childish that it became more amusing than offensive. I can remember, for example, that when he introduced his brother to me he did it by saying: "This is the brother of the great Houdini." This without any twinkle of humor and in a perfectly natural manner.

This enormous vanity was combined with a passion for publicity which knew no bounds, and which must at all costs be gratified. There was no consideration of any sort which would restrain him if he saw his way to an advertisement.

It was this desire to play a constant public part which had a great deal to do with his furious campaign against Spiritualism. He knew that the public took a keen interest in the matter and that there was unlimited publicity to be had from it. He perpetually offered large sums to any medium who would do this or that, knowing well that even in the unlikely event of the thing's being done he could always raise some objection and get out of it. Sometimes his tactics were too obvious to be artistic. In Boston he arrived by prearrangement before a great crowd at the City Hall and walked solemnly up the steps with ten thousand dollars' worth of stock in his hand, representing one of his perennial stakes against phenomena. This was in connection with his engagement on a tour of the music halls.

I am quite prepared to think that Houdini's campaign against mediums did temporary good as far as false mediums go, but it was so indiscriminate and accompanied by so much that was intolerant and offensive that it turned away the sympathy and help which Spiritualists who are anxious for the cleanliness of their own movement would gladly have given him.

The unmasking of false mediums is our urgent duty, but when we are told that, in spite of our own evidence and that of three generations of mankind, there are no real ones we lose interest, for we know that we are speaking to an ignorant man. At the same time the States, and in a lesser degree our own people, do need stern supervision.

I admit that I underrated the corruption in the States. What first brought it home to me was that my friend Mrs. Crandon told me that she had received price lists from some firm which manufactured fraudulent instruments for performing tricks. If such a firm can make a living there must be some villainy about, and a more judicious Houdini might well find a useful field of activity. It is these hyenas who retard our progress.

THERE was a particular hall in Boston which Houdini used for his tirades against Spiritualism. Some weeks after his campaign a curious and disagreeable phenomenon broke out there. Showers of gravel or small pebbles fell continually among the audience, and several people suffered minor injuries. A police watch was kept up for some time, and eventually it was shown that a staid employee, whose record was an excellent one, was in the habit, without rhyme or reason, of stealing up to the gallery and throwing these missiles down into the stalls. When tried for the offense he could only say that a senseless but overwhelming impulse caused him to do it. Many psychic students would be prepared to consider that the incident could bear the interpretation of a *poltergeist* on the one side and an obsession on the other.

THERE was another incident at Boston of a very much more serious kind, and one which bears out my assertion that where there was an advertisement to be gained, Houdini was a dangerous man. The remarkable psychic powers of Mrs. Crandon, the famous "Margery," were at that time under examination by the committee of the *Scientific American*. Various members of this committee had sat many times with the Crandons, and some of them had been completely converted to the psychic explanation, while others, although unable to give any rational explanation of the phenomena, were in different stages of dissent. It would obviously be an enormous feather in Houdini's cap if he could appear on the scene and at once solve the mystery.

What a glorious position to be in! Houdini laid his plans and was so sure of success that before going to Boston he wrote a letter, which I saw, to a mutual friend in London, announcing that he was about to expose this medium. He would have done it, too, had it not been for an interposition! which was miraculous.

I think well enough of Houdini to hope that he would have held his hand if he could have realized the ruin and disgrace which his success would have brought upon his victims. As it was, the thought of the tremendous advertisement swallowed up his scruples. All America was watching, and he could not resist the temptation.

He had become familiar in advance with the procedure of the Crandon circle, and with the types of phenomena. It was easy for him to lay his plans. What he failed to take into account was that the presiding spirit, Walter, the dead brother of Mrs. Crandon, was a very real and live entity, who was by no means inclined to allow his innocent sister to be made the laughing stock of the continent. It was the unseen Walter who checkmated the carefully laid plans of the magician.

THE account of what occurred I take from the notes which were taken by the circle at the time. The first phenomenon to be tested was the ringing of an electric bell which could only be done by pressing down a flap of wood, well out of the reach of the medium. The room was darkened but the bell did not ring. Suddenly the angry voice of Walter was heard: "You have put something to stop the bell from ringing, Houdini, you ——!" he cried. Walter has a wealth of strong language and makes no pretense at all to being a very elevated being. All sorts have their use over there. On this occasion, at least, the use was evident, for when the light was turned up there was the rubber from the end of a pencil stuck into the angle of the flap in such a way as to make it impossible for it to descend and press the bell. Of course, Houdini professed complete ignorance as to how it had got there, but who else had the deft touch to do such a thing in the dark, and why was it only in his presence that such a thing occurred? It is clear that if he could have said afterwards, when he had quietly removed the rubber, that his arrival had made all further trickery impossible, he would have scored the first trick in the game.

He should have taken warning and realized that he was up against powers which were too strong for him, and which might prove dangerous if provoked too far. But the letters he had written and the boasts he had made cut off his retreat.

The second night landed him in a very much worse mess than the first one. He had brought with him an absurd box which was secured in front by no less than eight padlocks. One would have thought that it was a gorilla rather than a particularly gentle lady who was about to be confined within.

The forces behind Margery showed what they thought of this contraption by bursting the whole front open the moment Margery was fastened into it. This very unexpected development Houdini endeavored to explain away, but he found it difficult to give a reason why, if the box were so vulnerable, it was worth while to bring it with so much pomp and ceremony, with eight padlocks and many other gadgets, all the way from New York to Boston.

However, much worse was to come. The lady was put into the reconstituted box, her arms protruding through holes on each side. Houdini was observed without any apparent reason to pass his hand along the lady's arm, and so into the box. Presently, after some experiments, the lady's arms were placed inside and the attempt was to be made to ring the bell-box while only her head projected. Suddenly the terrible Walter intervened.

"Houdini, you —— blackguard!" he thundered. "You have put a rule into the cabinet! You ——! Remember, Houdini, you won't live forever. Some day you've got to die!"

The lights were turned on and, shocking to relate, a two-foot fold-

ing rule was found lying in the box. It was a most deadly trick, for, of course, if the bell had rung, Houdini would have demanded a search of the cabinet and the rule would have been found. Since it would, if held between the teeth, have enabled the medium to reach out and press down the flap of the bell-box, all America would have resounded next day with the astuteness of Houdini and the proven villainy of the Crandons. I do not think that even the friends of the latter could have got over the patent facts. It was the most dangerous moment of their career, and only Walter saved them from ruin.

FOR the moment Houdini was completely overcome and cowered, as well he might, before the wrath of the unseen. His offense was so obvious that no better excuse occurred to him, when he had rallied his senses, than that the rule had been left there by accident by some subordinate. When one considers, however, that no other tool upon earth, neither a hammer, a chisel, nor a wrench, but only a folding two-foot rule could have sustained the charge, one realizes how hopeless was his position.

But one of Houdini's characteristics was that nothing in this world or the next could permanently abash him. He could not suggest that the Crandons had placed the rule there, for Mrs. Crandon had actually asked to have the cabinet examined after she had entered, and Houdini had refused.

Yet, incredible as it may seem, he had his advertisement, after all, for he flooded America with a pamphlet to say that he had shown that the Crandons were frauds and that he had in some unspecified way exposed them. To account for the phenomena, he was prepared to assert that not only the doctor, but even members of the committee were in senseless collaboration with the medium.

The amazing part of the business was that other members of the committee seemed to be overawed by the masterful conjurer, and even changed their very capable secretary, Mr. Malcolm Bird, at his behest. Mr. Bird, it may be remarked, with a far better brain than Houdini, and with a record of some fifty séances, had by this time been entirely convinced of the truth of the phenomena.

IT MAY seem unkind that I should dwell upon these matters now that Houdini has gone to his account, but what I am writing now I also wrote and published during his lifetime. I deal gently with the matter, but I have to remember that its importance far transcends any worldly consideration, and that the honor of the Crandons is still impugned in many minds by the false charges which were not only circulated in print, but which were shouted by Houdini from the platforms of a score of music-halls with a violence which browbeat and overawed every protest from the friends of truth.

Houdini did not yet realize the gravity of his own actions, nor the consequences which they entailed. The Crandons are themselves the most patient and forgiving people in the world, treating the most irritating opposition with a good-humored and amused tolerance. But there are other forces which are beyond human control, and from that day the shadow lay heavy upon Houdini. His anti-Spiritualist agitation became more and more unreasoning until it bordered upon a mania which could be explained in some quarters only by supposing that he was in the pay of certain clerical fanatics.

It is true that in order to preserve some show of reason he proclaimed that he wished only to attack dishonest mediums, but as in the same breath he would assert that there were no honest ones, his moderation was more apparent than real.

I SUPPOSE that at that time Houdini was, from an insurance point of view, as far as bodily health goes, the best life of his age in America. He was in constant training, and he used neither alcohol nor tobacco. Yet all over the land warnings of danger arose. He alluded in public to the matter again and again.

In my own home circle I had the message a year or so ago: "Houdini is doomed, doomed, doomed! He can no longer be allowed to stand in the way of God's truth." So seriously did I take this warning that I would have written to him had I had the least hope that my words could have any effect. I knew, however, from previous experience, that he always published my letters, even the most private of them, and that it would only give him a fresh pretext for ridiculing that which I regard as a sacred cause.

But as the months passed and fresh warnings came from independent sources, both I and, as I believe, the Crandons, became seriously alarmed for his safety. He was, on one side of his character, so fine a fellow that even those who were attacked in this monstrous way were unwilling that real harm should befall him.

But he continued to rave, and the shadow continued to thicken. I have an American friend who writes in the press under the name of Samri Frikell. He was an intimate friend of Houdini's, and he has allowed me to quote some of his experiences:

> You knew him as well as I did [he writes]. You knew the immense vanity of the man. You know that he loved to be important. My experience with him for the last three months of his life was most peculiar. He would call me on the telephone at seven o'clock in the morning and he would be in a quarrelsome mood. He would talk for an hour, telling me how important he was and what a great career he was making. In his voice was a hysterical, almost feminine, note of rebellion, as if his hands were beating against an immutable destiny.
>
> In all these cases Houdini portrayed to me a clear sense of impending doom. This is not an impression which I have received subsequent to his death, but I commented upon it at the time. I believe that Houdini sensed the coming of his death but did not know that it meant death. He didn't know what it meant, but he hated it and his soul screamed out in indignation.

Some time later he telephoned to the same friend in a way which showed that his surmise had become more definite. "I am marked for death," said he. "I mean that they are predicting my death in spirit circles all over the country."

At that time he was starting in perfect health upon that vaudeville tour which was destined to be the last of his career. Within a few weeks he was dead.

THE details of that death were in many ways most singular. On October 12th he had a painful but, every one thought, an unimportant accident, when during his performance a weight fell upon one of his feet. The incident was treated quite lightly by the press, but was regarded more seriously by those who had other sources of information.

On October 13th, the day after the accident, the gentleman already quoted had a letter from a medium, Mrs. Wood. "Three years ago," said this ill-omened epistle, "the spirit of Doctor Hyslop said: 'The waters are black for Houdini,' and he foretold that disaster would befall him while performing before an audience in a theatre. Doctor

Hyslop now says that the injury is more serious than has been reported and that Houdini's days as a magician are over."

The sad prophecy proved to be only too true, though the injured leg was only the prelude of worse disaster. It seemed indeed to be a sign that the protective mantle which had been around him had for some reason been withdrawn. His health wilted in a strange way, though he continued for some weeks to give his accustomed show.

At Montreal a member of the audience rose to protest against the violence with which he raved against Spiritualism, and very particularly against me. Such personal attacks were not to be taken too seriously, for it was part of his perfervid nature to believe that any one who had experiences which differed from his own was either a dupe or a scoundrel.

Houdini bore up with great bravery against the pain from which he must have suffered continually, but in less than a fortnight, while on the stage at Detroit, he completely collapsed and was carried to that hospital from which he never emerged alive.

There were some remarkable points about his death. The immediate cause would seem to have been a ruptured appendix, though how or why it was ruptured has not been disclosed. The story about a blow from a student is, I believe, apocryphal. He seems to have known that he was doomed. "I guess I am through with fighting," he said, some days before the end.

Then at the last a singular thing is reported to have occurred. Robert Ingersoll, who had died thirty years before, was one of Houdini's heroes. He was heard now to be earnestly addressing him. A dialogue, one side of which was unheard, seemed to be proceeding. It was a strange end for the great opponent of spirit intercourse. It is open to the materialist to put such dying conversations down to senseless delirium. It may in some cases be so. I can remember, however, on one such occasion, noting ten or twelve names uttered by a woman in similar circumstances, and of them all there was not one the owner of which had not passed over. Had it been mere imagination, why should the dead have had precedence over the living?

EVEN after death strange things continued to happen which seem to be beyond the range of chance or coincidence. Some little time before his last illness Houdini had ordered a very ornate coffin which he proposed to use in some sensational act. He paid no less than twenty-five hundred dollars for it. The idea was, I believe, to have a glass face to it and to exhibit the magician within it after it was hermetically sealed up, for he had shown in a previous experiment an inexplicable capacity for living without air. He carried this coffin about with him in one of the very numerous crates in which all his apparatus was packed.

After his death all his goods were, as I am told, sent on to New York. It was found, however, that by some blunder one box had been left behind. On examination this was found to contain the show coffin, which was accordingly used for his burial.

At that burial some curious and suggestive words were used by the presiding Rabbi Barnard Drachman. He said: "Houdini possessed a wondrous power that he never understood, and that he never revealed to any one in life."

Such an expression, coming at so solemn a moment from one who may have been in a special position

to know, must show that my speculations are not extravagant or fantastic when I deal with the real source of those powers. The rabbi's speech is to be taken with Houdini's own remark, when he said to my wife: "There are some of my feats which my own wife does not know the secret of." He frequently said that his work would die with him, and he has left no legacy of it so far as can be seen, though it would clearly be a very valuable asset.

What can cover all these facts, save that there was some element in his power which was peculiar to himself, and that could only point to a psychic element—in a word, to the fact that he was a medium.

IN THE remarkable ceremony performed beside his coffin by his brother magicians, the spokesman broke a symbolic wand and said: "The wand is broken. God touched him with a wondrous gift, and our brother used it. Now the wand is broken."

It may indeed have been not mere trickery but a God-given gift which raised Houdini to such a height. And why should he not use it, if it were indeed the gift of God? I see no reason why the medium, like other God-endowed men—the painter, the poet, or the romancer—should not earn money and renown by his gift. Let him hesitate, however, before he makes rash attacks upon those who are using the same gift, and for higher ends.

Other curious points, which may possibly come within the range of coincidence, are connected with the death of Houdini. For example, there was a Mr. Gysel, who had shared in Houdini's views on Spiritualism. He wrote thus to my friend:

MR. FRIKELL: Something happened to me in my room on Sunday night, October 24, 1926. Houdini had given me a picture of himself which I had framed and hung on the wall. At the above time and date the picture fell to the floor, breaking the glass. I now know that Houdini will die. Maybe there is something in these psychic phenomena, after all.

To this Mr. Frikell adds:

As I think back on my own experience, I am inclined to agree that maybe there is indeed something to the psychic phenomena, after all.

His admission is the more noteworthy as I remember the day when he was a strong and intelligent opponent.

I WILL now turn to a consideration of the nature of Houdini's powers. In order to appreciate the argument one has to consider the nature of some of the feats which he actually did perform. A list of these would make a considerable pamphlet, but a few typical ones may be selected. A general outline of his life, too, may not be out of place.

Houdini's real name was Eric Weiss, and he was born in 1874, in the State of Wisconsin, in one of those small towns which seem to be the real centres of American originality. He was the seventh son of a Jewish rabbi, and he has left it on record that his mother did not even know the English language. He has also left it on record that in his early youth he had some connection with mediumship, though of a most doubtful variety. He has not scrupled to confess that he eked out any powers he may have had by the expedient of reading the names upon the graves in the local cemeteries. It was a good deal later than this that he first met a true medium in the shape of Ira Davenport, the only survivor of the famous brothers whose powers amazed all England in the sixties, and who, in spite of

all the interested claims of Maskelyne and other conjurers, were never exposed, nor even adequately imitated. I have before me as I write a letter from Houdini himself, in which he tells me:

> I was an intimate friend of Ira Erastus Davenport. I can make the positive assertion that the Davenport brothers never were exposed. I know more about the Davenports than any one living.

He then adds the very curious and notable sentence:

> I know for a fact that it was not necessary for them to remove their bonds in order to obtain manifestations.

When one considers that these bonds were often handcuffs or twisted copper wire, and that the manifestations occurred in many cases within a few seconds of the closing of the cabinet, this admission by one who claims that he knows is of very great importance. We will return to this later, after we have enumerated a few of his results.

HOUDINI could, and continually did, walk straight out of any prison cell in which he might be confined. They placed him at Washington in the cell in which Guiteau, the murderer of Garfield, had been locked. But he readily emerged. In the letter from which I have already quoted he says to me:

> I pledge my word of honor that I was never given any assistance, nor was I in collusion with any one.

This was clearly the case, for he performed the feat many times in different places and was always searched to prove that he had no tools in his possession. Sometimes the grinning wardens had hardly got out of the passage before their prisoner was at their heels. It takes some credulity, I think, to say that this was, in the ordinary sense of the word, a trick.

Handcuffs might have been made of jelly, so easily did his limbs pass through them. He was heavily manacled at Scotland Yard and placed behind a screen, over which a shower of manacles began to fall until he stepped out a free man. These things he could do in an instant. When I was lecturing at Carnegie Hall in New York, my wife and Houdini walked down some side corridor after the lecture in order to rejoin me. They came to a padlocked door, and my wife was about to turn back. To her amazement, her companion put out his hand and picked off the locked padlock as one picks a plum from a tree. Was that a trick, or are all these talks about sleight-of-hand what Houdini himself would have called "bunk" or "hokum"?

WHEN Houdini was in Holland he got the local basket-makers to weave a basket round him. Out of this he emerged. He was shut up later in a sealed paper bag and came out, leaving the bag intact. A block of ice was frozen round his body and he burst his way out.

One who has attempted to bring his feats within the range of normal explanations tells us that he did this by "depressing his periphery as a prelude to dynamic expansion"—whatever that may mean. He was also buried six feet deep in California and emerged unhurt, though we are not told by what dynamic expansion that feat was achieved.

In Leeds he was coopered up in a cask by the brewers, but he was soon out. At Krupps he defied the whole management, who constructed a special set of fetters to hold him. They had no better luck than the others. He was put into the Sibe-

rian convict van at Moscow, but walked straight out of it.

On December 2, 1906, he leaped from the old Belle Isle bridge at Detroit heavily handcuffed, and released himself under icy water which would have paralyzed an ordinary man's limbs. On August 26, 1907, he was thrown into San Francisco Bay with his hands tied behind his back and seventy-five pounds of ball and chain attached to his body. He came out none the worse. He escaped from a padlocked United States mail-bag. Finally he was manacled, tied up in a box, and dropped into the East River at New York, but lived to tell the tale. Are we children that we should be expected to believe that such things can be done by a mere knack?

Of course, I am aware that Houdini really was a very skilful conjurer. All that could be known in that direction he knew. Thus, he confused the public mind by mixing up things which were dimly within their comprehension with things which were beyond any one's comprehension. I am aware also that there is a box trick and that there is a normal handcuff and bag trick with which other magicians are familiar. But these are not in the same class with Houdini's work. I will believe they are when I see one of these other gentlemen thrown in a box off London Bridge.

TO show the difference between Houdini's methods and those by which the box trick is done by other conjurers, I will give a description of the latter by one who has all normal tricks at his finger-ends. He says:

> While the air-holes are there for ventilation, they are there for another purpose also, and that is that the man inside may get a catch or grip of that particular board. The first thing that is done by the man inside is to put his back against the side next the audience and with his feet force off the board with the air-holes in it. After freeing this board, with a bit of string he lowers this board to the floor. If any obstruction comes in the way in the shape of a nail which he cannot force with his concealed lever and hammer, he cuts the nail with a fine saw. Thus his escape. The ropes are only a blind, as there is quite sufficient room to get out between them. The procedure to close up again is simple. The iron nails are placed back upon the holes from which they were forced and squeezed in and knocked with a leather-covered hammer.

Such is the usual technique as described by an expert. Does any one believe that all this could be done, as I have seen Houdini do it, in a little over a minute, or could one imagine it being carried out at the bottom of a river? I contend that Houdini's performance was on an utterly different plane.

I WILL now take a single case of Houdini's powers, and of the sort of thing that he would say, in order to show the reader what he is up against if he means to maintain that these tricks had no abnormal element. The description is by my friend Captain Bartlett, himself a man of many accomplishments, psychic and otherwise. In the course of their conversation he said to his guest:

"How about your box trick?"

"Instantly Houdini's expression changed," reports the Captain. "The sparkle left his eyes and his face looked drawn and haggard. 'I cannot tell you,' he said in a low, tense voice. 'I don't know myself and, what is more, I have always a dread lest I should fail, and then I would not live. I have promised Mrs. Houdini to give up the box trick at the end of the season, for she makes herself ill with anxiety; and for myself, I shall be relieved, too.'

"He stooped to stroke our cats,

and to our amazement they fled from the room with their tails in the air, and for some minutes they dashed wildly up and down stairs, scattering the mats in all directions.

"After this we had an earnest talk on psychic phenomena, and he told me of strange happenings to himself, especially at the grave of his mother, to whom he was deeply attached.

"The trunk-makers of Bristol had made a challenge box from which he was billed to escape that evening. He begged me to be with him, explaining that he liked the support of a sensitive, more especially as he was feeling anxious.

"I willingly agreed, the more especially as he allowed me to bring a very observant friend, a civil engineer of repute.

"THE box was made of inch planking, tongued and grooved, with double thickness at the ends. It was nailed herring-bone fashion, three-inch nails, three inches apart. Several auger holes were made at one end to admit air, and the whole thing was carefully and solidly finished. It was, as I have said, a challenge box. Yet we thoroughly overhauled it, and were satisfied that it contained no tricks.

"Houdini lay down in it while the challengers climbed to the platform and nailed down the heavy top again, using three-inch nails as before. The box was then tightly roped, three men pulling on the cords. Meanwhile Houdini, inside the box, called out that it was very hot and, putting a finger through an air-hole, waggled it furiously.

"The box was then enclosed by a tent consisting of brass rods covered by a silken canopy.

"In ninety-five seconds Houdini was standing before his audience, breathless, and with his shirt in tatters. The boxmakers, after a careful examination in which we joined, declared that both box and roping were intact.

"Now, was Houdini's statement that he never knew how he got out of the box a mere blind or did he employ supernormal forces and dematerialize? If I put a beetle in a hermetically sealed bottle and that beetle makes its escape, I, being only an ordinary human and not a magician, can only conclude that either the beetle has broken the laws of matter, or that it possesses secrets that I should call supernormal."

I WOULD also ask the thoughtful reader to consider the following account by Mr. Hewat Mackenzie, one of the most experienced psychic researchers in the world. In his book, "Spirit Intercourse" (page 86), he says:

> A small iron tank filled with water was deposited on the stage, and in it Houdini was placed, the water completely covering his body. Over this was placed an iron lid with three hasps and staples, and these were securely locked. The body was then completely dematerialized within this tank in one and a half minutes, while the author stood immediately over it. Without disturbing any of the locks Houdini was transferred from the tank directly to the back of the stage in a dematerialized state. He was there materialized and returned to the stage front dripping with water, and attired in the blue jersey suit in which he had entered the tank. From the time that he entered it to the time that he came to the front only one and a half minutes had elapsed. While the author stood near the tank during the dematerialization process a great loss of physical energy was felt by him, such as is usually felt by sitters in materializing séances who have a good stock of vital energy, for in such phenomena a large amount of energy is required. This startling manifestation of one of Nature's profoundest miracles was probably regarded by most of the audience as a very clever trick.

In other words, the audience was successfully bluffed by the commercialization of psychic power. It is

remarkable and most suggestive that in this case, as in the Bristol one already given, Houdini was anxious that some psychic from whom he could draw strength should stand near him.

Can any reasonable man read such an account as this and then dismiss my theory as fantastic? It seems to me that the phantasy lies in accepting any other explanation.

A POINT worth considering is that, even if we grant that enormous practice and natural advantages might conceivably give a man a facility in one direction which might appear preternatural, these feats of Houdini cover a larger range than could be accounted for by any one aptitude. This consideration becomes stronger still when one sees that his powers really covered the whole field of what we usually associate with physical mediumship in its strongest form, and can be covered, as far as I can see, by no other explanation whatever.

Thus, he himself gave the following account of an interview with ex-President Roosevelt:

"I had a slate with the usual covering. Roosevelt wanted to know if the spirits could tell him where he had spent Christmas day. In a few moments I had brought forth a map done in many colors of chalk, which indicated where he had been on the famous River of Doubt. That map was one which was the exact duplicate of one that was to appear in his book, which had not yet been published. I had never seen the map."

One would hardly associate this with an ordinary conjurer's trick. Again, a friend reports:

"One day a skeptic called upon him. Houdini read the man's hand, prognosticated his future and pronounced his past from a mere reading of his face, having only been told the day of his birth. This was done with an accuracy and vividness which astonished the subject."

This sounds like possible clairvoyance, but is hardly in the repertoire of the conjurer.

*In Part II of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's remarkable paper, to appear in the January issue, he will discuss Houdini's direct relations with Spiritualism.*

*And then with the light he let us see him, from cap to polished boots, in German uniform.*

# The Spy Master

A SERIES*

By RICHARD WILMER ROWAN

*Von Karl displays a novel Afghan accent and gives due warning that his "golden rule" is: two eyes for an eye, or even for an eyelash. And all the while the tramp-tramp-tramp of soldier feet beats the rhythm and sets the pace for the dauntless trio behind the enemy lines.*

## 2. The Siege at the Dark Chateau

SINCE Conrad von Karl would never explain his preference for Diane Duplessis and me, we did not try to account for it. We simply obeyed orders and sought to take advantage of it. And the ethical aspect of our pursuit we dared not ponder. The counter-espionage service must often begin where ethics end.

Not because we had saved his life when he sank the yacht *Achilles*—for he conceded no such feat or obligation; not because we both were young, and Diane also very beautiful—though manifestly he admired

* The first of this series appeared in the November number. A copy of this issue will be sent anywhere in the United States on receipt of 25c.

youth and delighted in her special loveliness; for no reason, in short, that he cared to admit, yet with a curious absence of reserve, did Von Karl claim us as friends and share with us his complex confidence.

In Paris he informed a Cabinet Minister that only we two had persuaded him to come into the service of France, after Legendre of the Foreign Office had been stabbed to death by an assassin at Monte Carlo in the very midst of their negotiation. He spoke of Diane's wit and daring and of my resolution; so that she stood in high favor with sundry bureaucrats, while Paul Marin, my friend, acting for his superior, Major Bertrand, offered me a commission in the reserve of their secret corps, which I accepted.

During March and April I was constantly in the company of Conrad von Karl, whom none in authority deemed worthy of much trust. He was being engaged, in the main, to keep Wilhelmstrasse from getting him. I was instructed to note down his every chance observation, and Diane Duplessis had similar orders. Coöperating, we were expected to determine in a few weeks whether he took French pay and yet was in communication with the enemies of France.

Even before the assassination of the Archduke at Sarajevo, those enemies were clearly defined; and some months before August of 1914 peace in Europe was a sham no child misunderstood. Smart men bought munitions shares in May and June. Through Von Karl, I was to meet one such studious speculator.

But in the first week of June the Spy Master, with no more notice than was his habit, vanished into the Balkans.

In his absence I took a fortnight's leave, visiting friends in England. Diane, who was not really French, having been born at Oristano in Sardinia, went to rest briefly upon that picturesque isle.

IT WAS July 6 when Paul Marin gave us our last order under the guise of peaceful investigation. Before either Diane or I saw him again the red placards were up—the youth of nine nations mobilized for war.

"Von Karl," said Marin, "is organizing an odd sort of house party at the château of Max du Parc, which is about half-way between Maubeuge and Guise. He maintains that there will be war in from four to six weeks. Du Parc's château, he claims, is magnificently strategic. Armies will fight it out along the Lorraine frontier. If we advance, he will be admirably located to direct his spies in the German zone of combat. If we retreat, he will actually remain behind the German front, and can communicate to us all manner of vital intelligence."

"And we?" Diane queried.

"You become guests of Du Parc. You study the others—Conrad von Karl's people they will be, he says. Try to discern their probable worth to us and possible treachery," Marin directed. "Du Parc included. Von Karl also."

"You still do not trust him?" I said.

"And never shall," came his prompt reply. "However, it is a relief and an advantage to have him even pretending to serve us exclusively. If the war is big enough, he will inevitably trade with both sides."

"We had perhaps better shoot him and have done with it," Diane observed with an affected gravity.

I objected that another might inherit control of his private secret service, his unimaginable network of informers, traitors, and spies, and

prove even less desirable to deal with.

"That is so," Marin agreed. "Von Karl professes to have been converted by you two. His price remains high, and we must play his game for a while, if only to get our money's worth. As to his being shot—he has chosen for himself this assignment near to the probable line of battle," he added, "and artillery being what it is——" His shrug was all-inclusive.

"You are a comfort, Paul," Diane jeered. "We'll also be exposed to every shell that could mutilate the poise and symmetrical splendor of the great Von Karl."

"I know that," Marin said seriously. "I regret it, and wish you both the best of luck, my friends."

He and I shook hands at parting, conscious that another such meeting might never be again and that very soon across Europe events would sever other multitudes of friendly ties. He raised Diane's hand to his lips with graceful gallantry; and then she and I set forth from headquarters to prepare for our mission in the north.

WE ARRIVED at the château by motor on the morning of the seventh. The superb park, the lawn and terraces, the glimpse we caught of the gardens beyond—all bespoke possession by a man of great wealth and of cultivated tastes. But the buildings were not attractive, being of hybrid architecture, neither of one school nor another, and neither old nor modern. And though we were to find the interior of the château exquisitely luxurious, I never enjoyed any view of its dark walls and frowning towers. I had admired the great gray residences of French aristocracy to such a degree during provincial journeys that my disappointment here was all but openly resentful. Du Parc's vast dwelling was no home, no family seat, nor was it even formidable with the saving strength of fortress or menacing prison. It was sullen. The dark château glowered—yet perhaps with a patriot scowl, as if alive and aware of the renegades and treacherous schemers infesting it now.

CONRAD VON KARL himself, in a white riding habit, his polished black boots grotesquely displaying the gold spurs of medieval knighthood, appeared on the terrace and was foremost in extending us a welcome. Had we been his own grandchildren come for a visit, he could scarcely have doted upon us more. He was, of course, wearing his green turban with the wondrous emerald in it—so splendid, so eye-compelling, and so out of place. I thought he looked of even darker complexion than when I had last dined with him in Paris, and then a head-waiter had called him "Highness," and he had played the maharaja, omitting but few observances of Islam, Hindustan—or our own Western dramatic stage.

Yet now he seemed sincere with us both. His fine black eyes were alight with approval as he looked upon Diane in her *chic* gray traveling costume. And he offered us each a strong brown hand so heartily it even discounted that abominable affectation of manicure—his long, tapering and polished finger-nails dyed a grisly shade of blue-green.

"Is there anything we ought to know or beware of before we meet our host?" Diane questioned.

"I am virtually the host here," said he. "Always beware of me, my sweet one."

"But M. Max du Parc is entertaining, as I understand it from Captain Marin."

"Du Parc," said the Spy Master,

"rests rather easily in the hollow of this hand." With a grim gesture he extended his, palm up, and then the fingers with their flashing nails clinched shut into a swarthy fist. "Not only did I have occasion to save his life—and he, by the bye, was plain Max Bendheim then—but I also put him into a series of speculations that enriched him beyond the dreams of avarice."

"Hardly beyond the dreams of your avarice," Diane gaily exclaimed.

"What a tonic you are for my ego!" he retorted. "But why do you say that, seductive lady?"

"Because if this Du Parc had all that you dream of, you would take it from him," said she.

He laughed with a ringing depth of merriment which I could never quite associate with his sinister appearance.

"WE SHALL be happy here," he said. "At least—until the war comes."

"Next month?" I ventured.

"That is my expectation."

"And I suppose," Diane pursued her raillery, "there is almost no chance of a General Staff's deceiving you?"

He was escorting us now to the main entrance of the dark château.

"Most generals," said he, "get beyond their depth even while merely deceiving themselves."

"A war should make you very rich," I said.

"Yes; but it may cost me a little."

"The high value you set upon exquisite living," Diane said, "almost disqualifies you for the career of a spy in time of war. Discomfort—death—which do you fear?"

"I have no reason to dread either," he answered. "But I fear for the manner of living as we cultivate it to-day. Such a war may come as will destroy forever this Europe that we know." Even during moments of tragic intensity aboard the *Achilles* I had not heard him speak so gravely. The tread of marching battalions was a veritable undertone to his phrases. "I have done more than my share in promoting conflict," he added. "I wonder—shall I gain or shall I lose?"

WE HAD seen the Spy Master giving his orders freely aboard a yacht which another owned, and now Diane and I were amused to witness his suave management of Max du Parc's house party. Du Parc himself we found to be a fussy, overdressed little man, as dark, as pretentious, as unprepossessing, as his great manor house. And because Conrad von Karl indicated an unflagging preference for our society, Du Parc in turn afflicted us with an hospitable anxiety which would have been unbecoming to a peasant innkeeper. All that belonged to him, he reiterated, was ours to command!

"But he seems to wear it nearly all. Must we even undress him?" was Diane's comment to Von Karl, and freely repeated by him—so that Du Parc must have heard it. But our alleged host showed neither resentment nor a disposition to reform his career as a male *mannequin*.

His other profession was a frequent descriptive advertisement of how Von Karl had rescued him from death. His gratitude, after almost ten years, seemed on the increase. Following the Russo-Japanese War, according to his favorite account, they had been speculating together—in some shady way, no doubt—through the East Indies, Siam, Cochin-China, and the Straits Settlements. And thus they had come aboard a junk, a day's sail from Singapore, when its crew undertook a piratical uprising. Du Parc, be-

sides getting a fearful wound, had accounted for only one Oriental attacker; but Conrad von Karl in his fury had carved that coolie revolt into a piecemeal condition of regret. Du Parc declared nine bodies had been cast overboard by the survivors.

After this story was variously told, he had only one reserve topic of conversation. The day after the Austrian Archduke's assassination, he bragged, he had bought Vickers' munitions shares.

"Because the British fleet," he would argue to reassure himself, "will always keep England free of invasion. If England stays neutral, Vickers can sell to both sides. While if the British fight, my shares will be safer and more valuable than any of the same sort on the Continent."

"What an international patriot!" Von Karl sneered, just as though all his own activities were gems of self-sacrifice and humaneness.

THE other guests at the château he also lightly ridiculed to us: the Dutch artist, Van Dorn, and his pretty Belgian wife—"his only work of art," said the Spy Master; the appalling Bulgarian, Kostoff, as yet many months away from his vast notoriety; the Polish lady entitled Countess Lorski, who had once been ravishingly beautiful. She now scarcely relished the competition of such youthful charm as that endowing Diane or Mme. van Dorn. Indeed, this noblewoman's effortful vivacity and her tireless mitigation of the ravages of time and fast living were to me the most repellent spectacle our first weeks at the château afforded.

And also there was the blonde Mrs. Shelten—she whom Marcolos had cherished aboard his ill-fated yacht. This really fascinating woman, who was of English birth but dared not go to England, spoke at once and very thankfully to Diane and me as her saviors when the *Achilles* went down. While within hearing there stood Conrad von Karl, the very man who had blown up the yacht, nominating her among its dozen victims.

Unembarrassed, of course, he frowned darkly and said: "Yes, Patricia, it was they that made me rake you in. I wonder how soon you will make them both regret it?"

"Fiend!" she responded. But she seemed careful about showing him any deep reproach. Another slave of his!

"That is how he recruits many of his best agents," Diane later said to me. "By some awful episode of terror."

WHEREUPON I was reminded of what I had seen by chance only that morning—the château mystery, the peculiarly ugly and efficient Alsatian woman, Gretchen Ganz, who was Du Parc's housekeeper. I had discovered her leaving Von Karl's room very furtively.

"That housekeeper?" Diane displayed exceeding surprise, I thought, for we never applied moral standards to the conduct of Von Karl. "You are sure? At what time?"

"Early for this household—a little before eight. I had arranged to play tennis with Patricia Shelten—"

"I know. And I was riding with Von Karl. We started," said she, "at a quarter past seven, to avoid tourist traffic and keep cool."

"Then he was not condescending. The woman is spying upon him."

"For Du Parc, I suppose. She is very loyal."

"But Du Parc is such a grateful friend," said I.

"And how does Von Karl treat that gratitude?"

I advocated our watching the Ganz woman more closely.

TWO days later, however, we set forth with Von Karl upon a motor trip to Namur and through Luxembourg to Metz and Sedan. He was, he assured us, supervising potentially important agents of his who were distributed through this vital sector. But we discounted the declaration, for he traveled in a great blue Mercedes with all his singular pomp, at each stop attracting profound local interest. And in Metz, that German stronghold, he contrived to stray from us, and he continued to be missing for almost two hours!

But then what apologies endured throughout the journey back to the dark château! Diane and I affected a childish reserve. We listened in silence—and the small muscular twitching above his right eye became exaggerated, an ironic reflex of one nerve in his body escaping iron control.

What could he say or do to convince us? To think that we two should thus stonily impugn his objective!

Of course, we sent a code report to Paul Marin, who we knew would not be delayed by any confirmation of his belief in the Spy Master's unreliability. Our wire must have reached the War Ministry in Paris an hour or two before the news which dwarfed all other written matter: the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia. And now there began that feverish, threatful period of Foreign Office exchanges, to be followed by the telegraphic appeals of royal cousins. The famous "Willy and Nicky" correspondence between Kaiser and Czar was not foreseen as the futile posturing of doomed monarchs. But Von Karl ridiculed it all immoderately.

"How can they interfere with what a thousand general officers and politicians desire?" he said.

The Hollander, Van Dorn, and his pretty wife began their hurried packing. But they went to Switzerland, not to the Atlantic seaboard; and Von Karl gave us to understand that they would do good work for him in Central Europe. Following them, we lost the Countess Lorski, whose destination was variously noted as Spain, Italy, and Denmark. Before the war ended I encountered her in Warsaw, but that also concerns the Spy Master, and waits for another chapter relating to his mobile destiny.

DU PARC, Mrs. Shelton, Kostoff, Diane, and I remained at the château, and, of course, Von Karl. Declarations of war were embroiling a continent. We waited. We had our orders from Bertrand himself. Beautifully mounted troops of French cavalry appeared on the road past the dark château, pushing northward toward Maubeuge. Belgium, we heard, was being invaded by a gray host. British regulars were landing. There must presently be a battle.

Paul Marin, using the military telegraph, advised us to stick to Von Karl at all costs, for his usefulness to France must soon be put to the test. On the highway, clearly in our view from the upper windows, a French army was advancing toward the Belgian frontier. General Landry, the courteous commander of a reserve division, accepted Max du Parc's hospitality for two nights, August 20 and 21. The château enjoyed the authority of divisional headquarters. By a very subtle change in manner, Conrad von Karl, from seeming an Occidental who tried to appear Oriental, became instead a traveler of the East osten-

sibly desiring to show himself in all ways Westernized. His name was now Murani Singh—an Afghan, he said. And he even had documents to prove it on inquiry.

August 23 found the English engaging at Mons. Namur surrendered. Northeast of Charleroi the French left wing encountered the German right. August 24 the small British army, beaten at Mons, retired obstinately, hopelessly outnumbered. Maubeuge was invested now, and Lanrezac's Fifth Army in retreat. The invasion of France had begun!

ALL next day it was raining, and we watched the regiments of infantry, with batteries of artillery and supply trains and cavalry—weary men and weary horses—stream past the château with their added burden of defeat. A brigade staff visited us, and a captain on detached service, Besson, who was one of Bertrand's men, advised that we evacuate. We might, said he, find ourselves in the center of the conflict.

Field artillery had invaded the lawn. Behind a low hedge they were placing mitrailleuses to command the turn in the highway—a truculent row of dwarfs they appeared under drenched and grimy tarpaulins. Max du Parc was eager to be gone by means of any conveyance that offered. But Von Karl, with that pronounced twitching above the right eye, jeered at our little host. None died in battle but heroes, he declared. "One glance at you, and Fate exempts you from that form of death, my friend. You are no mould of heroism," said the insolent pseudo-Afghan. "Selah!"

Off to the left toward evening we heard a heavy cannonade. Again outflanked, Lanrezac's army must resume its dreadful march, falling back upon Guise. The brigade staff deserted us after several young aides, who had doubtless seen Diane or Mrs. Shelton, had stopped to harangue the timid Du Parc for his foolhardy, senseless tarrying.

"We may all get ourselves shot," Von Karl admitted to Diane and me. "But I think not. I know how to handle these Germans. And you are neither of you French—one Sardinian and one American—nor can they trace your official connections in Paris."

"Not unless you yourself betray us!" was my thought. I studied Diane's face, and knew she had also reflected upon that consequence. Well, having undertaken a duty——

And now we were both reminded to tell Von Karl of the Alsatian housekeeper, that silent and efficient creature, Gretchen Ganz. Seen but the once departing from his bedroom, she had failed, within the scope of our casual observation, to yield any further proof of her illicit venturing.

The Spy Master strutted a bit and leered at me, as though Diane were absent. "On occasion Ganz is a rather less unsightly wench than you suppose," said he. "I fascinated her, it seems. She had speculated much upon the life within the harem."

"Spare us the details of her initiation," said I.

Diane, for all her imposed sophistication, turned to thank me with a smile.

"Truly, I am helping you to win this lady, American," Von Karl boldly proclaimed. "And as for Ganz, who knows her national sympathies? If I had ignored the woman, she might have endangered our whole enterprise, after the invaders surround us here."

HE ROUSED me early next morning—the 26th—by rapping sharply upon my bedroom door.

"Get up," he called, "and assume your most ingratiating air."

"Why?"

"Uhlans," said Von Karl.

Patrols of the celebrated horsemen were, indeed, passing the château at a brisk trot, tall lances at rest and the black and white pennons arrogantly signaling their threat of martial conquest.

"We'll see Von der Marwitz's cavalry corps," the well-informed master of espionage announced, "and then Von Bülow's Second Army, pursuing Lanrezac. The German is said to be exceedingly sensitive about civilian observations, so we must not appear to employ field glasses."

His own binoculars were the strongest I had ever tried. And he was ready to mask their use with great cunning. From his considerable luggage he brought forth a parcel of curious oval shape and unwrapped it with great zest.

"A child's toy—for adult play," said he, and held up a *papier-mâché* false-face, an oversize and solemnly pink visage already adjusted with wires to hang in front of his glasses, so that he might focus them upon hostile troops without detection from a distance. "A pale face may look out upon the invasion," he added. "Here—see—a regiment of Saxons." He allowed Diane and me to practise with the powerful binoculars, peering out through the eye slits of the stiff paper mask. "Timid and innocent and suitable," he assured us. "Not disposed to antagonize a busy provost marshal."

And all through that day we studied the helmeted gray battalions. Detachments frequently entered the park, and a marching regiment stopped to eat dinner by the roadside. But the château itself seemed somehow strangely set apart, for we knew that other dwellings in the vicinity had been commandeered for groups of officers. Then, just before sunset, we understood our exception.

A STREAM of huge gray motors rolled in from the highway, and a small horde of officers and orderlies dispersed upon the shadowy terraces. A great Mors car came to a stop before the main entrance. There was no mistaking the glitter of these visitors, the crisp respect of all bystanders, the coats with scarlet facings—an army staff. A tall general entered the dark château, a cloud of adjutants and aides in his train.

"Von Bülow, commanding the Second Army," said Conrad von Karl.

"What more can we ask?" Diane queried, jesting.

"Take care that we do not get more than we can consume," the Spy Master rebuked her rather grimly. "And remember—hereafter I am of the East. I speak Hindustani, only a little French, and no German. Remember!"

Du Parc, of course, was the most palpitant among us, eager for the Prussian heel upon his swarthy neck. He became a veritable butler in his own house, but more servile than any genuine butler I had ever seen. Busy and arrogant young officers ignored him. They had their own briskly mechanical soldier servants. Our own comfort was artfully maintained by the housekeeper, the peculiar, unobtrusive Gretchen Ganz, who had only two maids and an old gardener left at the château since the mobilization.

AND now a young captain came to address us all in one of the upstairs sitting-rooms. Very explicitly he stated our few privileges as noncombatants and our many obligations. He mentioned both the honor

and security conferred upon us by our visitor of exalted military rank. Lastly he asked for minute identifications.

What a polyglot tribe we seemed to represent, thus marooned in France in the midst of war, but not one of us claiming French citizenship. Du Parc eagerly established himself as Dutch by adoption. Kostoff was cordial and endeavored to project his Bulgar sympathies with Potsdam. Diane and I were finally passed over with some skepticism. Patricia Shelton admitted her English birth; yet she had documents proving herself legally separated—but not divorced—from a Cuban spouse. Conrad von Karl was the next.

Murani Singh! Speaking Hindustani?

Wonders of Teutonic erudition! The young staff captain could even speak some of the Hindu dialects.

By such extravagant mischance were we lost?

VON KARL'S smile was benign. He wore a white turban tightly bound, no jewel adorning it. And his finger-tips hid themselves in the capacious sleeves of his white robe.

Almost was I certain that a hand would flash forth with knife or revolver. Yet an army surrounded us . . .

Little Max du Parc was as gray of face as the spotless gray of our interrogator's military tunic. Von Karl bowed and then he spoke—and it seemed to be in Hindustani.

He and the German captain conversed for nearly five minutes, slowly, and they parted with the fastidious ceremonial of the East.

"My Afghan accent was novel to him," was all that the Spy Master said of our moment of peril.

We had been told we must give up our rooms, and German soldiers stolidly assisted in this transfer, grouping us together and cramping us somewhat in the one wing. The commanding general, when awake, remained in Du Parc's fine library. Next morning we could see corps commanders who arrived for an important conference.

Here was our situation, as Von Karl had foreseen it in July. We were living at a principal German headquarters, even though restrictedly—and the astute spy can benefit from many a restriction intended to thwart his deadly work.

"Lanrezac is not routed, but on the defensive at Guise, and must be attacked there," said Von Karl, with his wizard's talent for hearing things. "The British have been roughly handled at Le Cateau. Von Klück pushes on, so Von Bülow's army must."

But when I suggested that we endeavor to communicate this vital intelligence to French headquarters, the Spy Master permitted himself a smile.

"There is one thing even a bad general will always know, my friend," said he. "He will know whether he is winning or losing, though he may not know why." Diane agreed. "The information we ought to obtain and get through with is the strength of their reserve. I suspect that only Von der Marwitz's cavalry corps closes the gap between Von Klück on the extreme right flank and this Second Army. If that gap were tactically widened—" He shrugged, possibly assuming that he wasted such subtleties upon my inexperience.

DIANE now spoke in a whisper. "Were you ever in the armory?" she queried.

"It amuses me," said Von Karl. "Every *parvenu* castle boasts an armory, stocked with the imitation

gear of alleged Crusader ancestries."

"There is a gallery at the left of the armory," she continued softly.

"Well?"

"And there is a smaller gallery at the right of the library." She paused, an excited throb flowing into her tone. "The two galleries connect," said she.

If we could get into the armory, then, we might presently be able to hear what the German generals debated at their council. If we were caught, we could expect to die within the hour. If we avoided detection, we had yet the problem of communicating safely whatever of importance might be overheard.

Von Karl left us to reconnoitre.

I STUDIED Diane with a new admiration not unmixed with sickening dread. How audacious she was, how young, how enchanting, to hazard herself against such odds!

"Aren't we fools to trust him ever again?" I exclaimed.

But she argued that the Spy Master, were he disposed to betray us here, would need no such intricate form of trap. Nor were we guilty of espionage in any strict sense—though strict enough for a hasty court martial. Von Karl and his people were the spies, and France had engaged to pay him well. We were merely observers, assigned to report upon his own celebrated methods and discern his integrity, if any.

As for his people — discounting Max du Parc altogether — it was clear that the odious Kostoff and Patricia Shelten deliberately sought the favor of the hostile troops. In short, Diane and I were associated with an ornate enigma, Conrad von Karl, and a pair of chartered renegades. And our great risk was evident. That we overlooked Gretchen Ganz was partly negligence, but also partly the result of her studied indifference to the invaders and her obscure though repeated triumphs over the housekeeping hardships their presence imposed.

WHEN Von Karl rejoined us in about half an hour he said it appeared we might easily enter the armory. But no haste was necessary, as the generals were dining, not planning a battle; and he believed they awaited some word from Von Moltke's headquarters in Luxembourg. When I showed my concern for the flexible loyalties of Kostoff and Mrs. Shelten, he was not in the least perturbed.

"That is the game," said he. "They have to parade a notable fondness for the German cause. You do not hate—you kiss—before you betray. Judas set a changeless fashion in that," he added cynically.

"Knowing that, how can you be sure they aren't selling you out?"

"My success," he said, "is founded upon a kind of inevitability. I take two eyes for an eye or even an eyelash. And for a tooth I have taken off sometimes the top of a treacherous head. Kostoff and the pretty Shelten are smart enough to be afraid of me.

"She is a bold little devil, though. She has persuaded Bülow's chief of staff to get her a military transport pass," he confided. "At my direction, she and Kostoff leave for Strassburg in an hour."

"And when do we leave—for the armory?" Diane questioned.

"You both insist upon coming with me?" He paused, surveying us almost fondly. "You are two fools," he said when we asserted our preference for the dangerous activity. "Yet I shall be safer myself, perhaps, if I have you to look out for."

Half an hour later, by a rear staircase, Von Karl led us down to a hallway, and then more boldly into the serving pantry and spacious kitchen of the château.

Here we found Max du Parc busily employed with his housekeeper and three young German orderlies, preparing fresh dainties for the ample appetite of the army commander, his staff, and his guests. Diane chatted in German with a friendly blond soldier while we stopped to indulge ourselves. But here Von Karl played the Asiatic, accepting only a goblet of milk and a biscuit after much garbled French and pantomime.

Gretchen Ganz, avoiding us sullenly, looked on in disgust; and I assumed that she was irritated because we were diverting Du Parc from his volunteer culinary tasks. He did seem embarrassed to perform as a *chef* in Von Karl's presence, and when we left the kitchen he came along with us.

"THERE is one room in your house of plague," said the Spy Master, "where we hope to spend a quiet hour of reflection. Ancient arms should protect us from the surfeit of modern armies——"

Du Parc understood. "But, Conrad," he whispered, "the armory is forbidden."

"Is it occupied?"

"No. But it adjoins the library——"

"So much the better," Von Karl snapped.

The little speculator's eyes bulged with a new horror. "But—but—" he gasped.

"Be silent!"

And so we proceeded, the four of us, meeting no officers or men, and passing quietly into the great, dim room. The armory of the dark château was two stories high, with a graceful stair curving at the end to the gallery, which was now our immediate goal.

"Stand guard by the door!"

Du Parc was helpless with terror, so I obeyed Von Karl's command, accepting a listening post.

"A little more light."

Diane was already adjusting one shutter very gently. And then up the stair toward the gallery went Von Karl, his robe held up absurdly—a necessary precaution to avoid tripping. Diane prepared to follow. But I now gestured my vague alarm, halting them both.

"What is it?" she hissed.

I had heard heavy boots moving at the double-quick. This harsh and ominous sound briefly receded.

"All right," I replied. "It has passed."

But that brisk military tread was drawing near again. I dared not raise my voice, but endeavored to warn them.

"Quick! Come down!" I urged.

Diane obeyed, though Von Karl tarried. Rather roughly I seized her arm, guided her to a suit of Fifteenth Century Milanese armor standing erect by the wall, and tucked her into the shadow beside it. And I had only another moment to turn away from the poor hiding place when the large double-door at which I had listened swung open with a slam, exposing Du Parc, Von Karl, and me in foolish, frozen attitude of arrested wariness.

A PRUSSIAN major confronted us. A step back of him stood an orderly, and beside this soldier the housekeeper, Gretchen Ganz, her sullenness explicit now—malevolent, slightly stooping, her plain face thrust forward, flushed and keen.

"Excellency, you see," she said in German. "They are spies, the whole nest of them, Excellency. I have been watching, and I know."

The major, Von Stein, was a big, red-headed, surly brute, whose local energies as provost had revolted us all. We knew that he was not popular with his brother officers. And there were soldiers who aspired to shoot him down.

No German at the château could have been less welcome in this situation; and none among the invaders would have enjoyed it more.

"Call the guard!" he snarled. "But quietly—the council must not be disturbed."

The guard! Du Parc, poor wretch, began a dismal bleating, and the burly Von Stein swore at him and then fiercely drew his sabre, the weapon deemed more suitable for enforcing silence. He advanced into the dim armory, the Ganz woman doggedly following him; and he motioned to her to close the door. From his place on the stair Conrad von Karl had started speaking rapidly in German.

"Silence, you!" the major demanded.

"The fool doesn't know the Wilhelmstrasse code," lamented Von Karl, his memory a file of secrets and signals acknowledged by many governments.

He spoke in English, and Von Stein understood it, retorting with an angry insult. The Spy Master blandly responded, and from their obscene abuse even the stolid Gretchen Ganz recoiled.

If Von Karl had other weapons than a vast vituperative talent, he did not choose to uncover them. But the major, unable to reach him with the shining sabre, was furiously plucking at his holster.

"Shoot and disturb the generals who try to think," Von Karl taunted him. "Shoot, you——"

POOR little Du Parc, his greedy soul shriveled in fright, believed he might get away while the verbal storm spread. He darted at the door, but the Ganz woman, jealous of her successful perfidy, tripped him as he passed her; and then the furious major swung round and plunged his sabre into Du Parc's throat as he struggled to rise. It was a hideous wound that the cruel blade inflicted, and Diane and I stood helpless, aghast.

But at our side was Von Karl—an avenging shadow, he seemed, descending at a bound. On every wall of the room hung ancient weapons and pieces of armor; and he twitched down a mace from among these in passing. The mace had a shaft perhaps twenty inches long, its head a knob of fine steel with spikes sprouting viciously. Von Karl's motion of taking blended into the action of using. Up and down the shaft swung—and then came the impact, a horrid cracking sound and splash.

Brains redder than the hair lately bristling above them now drenched a smart uniform coat and stained Von Karl to his elbow. With a very nice precision he let the sagging body of Von Stein sink to the armory floor.

Fortunately Diane had thought to watch Gretchen Ganz, and so came from behind the suit of mail to block the housekeeper's sudden retreat. They struggled at the door; but with her ready wit, Diane kept one hand over the woman's mouth.

"I struck too vigorously," Von Karl complained. "We might have made use of that uniform."

But I was running to help Diane, and he joined me, seeing that the Ganz woman was breaking away. She fought us all three savagely and was not subdued before she had sunk her teeth into my forearm and hurt me badly enough.

Von Karl found leather cords, and he and Diane bound her with respect

only for her strength and ferocity.

"Well, I did waste my time," he said as he looked down upon the pinioned housekeeper. "But do you know," he exclaimed, "she is the first woman who ever turned upon me without a great deal of provocation —without being openly abandoned——"

"We must hurry!" Diane interrupted. "The guard will come."

I had bent over Max du Parc, who was sobbing his life away. Diane joined me, but each of us saw how hopeless was his stricken state; and Von Karl, supposedly his friend for years, hardly spared the little man a second glance.

FIRST the Spy Master bolted the armory door, and then he dragged the Ganz woman to a remote corner and draped a tapestry to conceal her from any but the closest inspection. Diane and I at the door were listening fearfully. And now we could hear them coming—soldiers in field boots, trying to walk softly, so that generals might not be distracted.

"Excellency!" It was the voice of the major's orderly. He was trying the armory door. "They are here, Excellency—the guard," he said.

"Come—up this way!" Von Karl exclaimed. He led and we followed, up the stairs to the gallery extending half around the room of ancient arms.

There was no time to consult his purpose. It seemed a mad strategy; but he had just slain a staff officer, and that was a kind of guarantee that he would remain loyal to us as a legitimate fellow fugitive.

"The soldiers will hesitate about breaking down a door," he stopped to say. "They will have to have an officer in charge of their pursuit, and even he will pause before ordering any commotion, or starting to head us off through the library." He looked hurriedly around him, fastening upon some new object of inspiration. "But that way," he declared, "through the library, sacred to Herr von Bülow and his generals —that is how we are going to escape."

HE HAD taken Von Stein's revolver. I noticed, too, that he still held the horrid, dripping mace.

"Only that one orderly is left to identify us as those whom the Ganz woman denounced," said he. "He did not see me at all on the stairs, and in the poor light he can scarcely have seen you two. If we disguise ourselves and get out of this room, our guilt will never be proved." He paused, casting about him for our disguises. Then he motioned us to some armor that adorned the gallery near where we stood. "Take those helmets," he urged. "The face pieces down will make perfect masks. The shields, too. And here —these tapestries will make us rich cloaks."

Diane had caught his idea and already was acting upon it.

I tried on a helmet. It was chill and hard and very dusty, and it pinched my ears and temples, yet I squeezed it on. Below, though with no great uproar, the door of the armory had begun to be subjected to some prodigious pressure. We must hasten, for soon surely would the gray troopers come bursting in.

Von Karl handed me a shield and a halberd. Diane had already draped a tapestry about her. She pulled down another panel and wrapped me in its musty, priceless fabric. Von Karl gave her a sword, and kept another for himself.

"Against bullets?" I scoffed at these weapons.

"Wait and see," the Spy Master

retorted. "And now are we all ready? Follow me!"

We were three travesties of knighthood in its flower. But there seemed slight chance of our being identified. On Von Karl's keen, swarthy face there was a fleeting grin as he observed our burlesque of chivalry—the shields, the tapestries, the helmets donned in haste and at rakish angles.

His gesture warned that we must move as quietly as we could in such gear. He led the way along the short passage from the gallery of the armory to that door which opened upon a similar platform above the heads of the grave war council.

We passed through the door, and Von Karl took from me the halberd I had ridiculed. Sounds told us the siege below there, at the armory door, was near an end. Von Karl adroitly propped the halbred to hold fast the door we were leaving behind us.

AND now he really hesitated, in doubt, trying to peer down from our new gallery position upon the German generals conferring in the château library. But we had been heard, it appeared. Elderly, imperious faces were turning up to us in amazement. What rule of war, what code of noncombatant discipline, applied to our manifestation?

Von Bülow and his subordinates were grouped around a large table with a great field map spread out upon it. They were all in gray, with glittering decorations and boots of astounding polish, while we were tarnished and tatterdemalion in our makeshift, weird disguises. Yet it seemed that they feared us. On Von Karl's helmet was a red plume, a kind of ancient sportive challenge to combat, and all his get-up and manner were similarly grotesque and superb, with Diane and me merely his background.

Giving them this bizarre, raffish show—with his life and ours at stake—he was completely himself.

"*Hoch! Excellenz!*" he acclaimed the commander of the Second Army. "I am the spectre of war," he told them, and in more rapid German explained his menacing distinction in their midst.

Down there the Prussian leaders were gaping like so many raw recruits.

"A symbol!" Von Karl shouted at them. "Beware!" After a flourish, he deftly tossed down among them the mace, with the blood of Von Stein wet upon it.

The brutal old weapon rolled gruesomely across their map, streaking red upon their nice plan of the morrow's battle at Guise. It clanked and it spun. And every one of them turned from staring at us to watch the offensive thing as it whirled and spattered their chosen sector.

"Where it comes to rest," Von Karl boldly proclaimed, "there will you fight and meet defeat."

They watched the mace handle moving on, and so did we—till Von Karl nudged us sharply. "Now!" he whispered, and swiftly led us off along the gallery.

Those German general officers were organizing fresh slaughter; but the blood on the mace was not to their liking. They were still watching it, transfixed, when Von Karl rushed us out by another door which he knew of, and which he at once fastened with the two swords and a shield, cunningly wedged together.

"I SHOULD have liked to see where it did stop on their map," said Diane.

Von Karl chuckled. "Between Verdun and the Marne or the Oise," he said. A confounding prophecy!

Hurriedly he had begun to shed his helmet and the tapestry cloak, and again we copied him.

"Now, very softly," he ordered. "The advantage of this mongrel château architecture is the number of odd and informal passages it provides. Come!"

Our path led down a narrow and steep flight of steps, through a deserted servants' hall, and then down again, underground, into the extensive cellars of Max du Parc's great dwelling. These cellars, said the Spy Master, he had recently chanced to explore with much thoroughness when advising his host about concealment of vintage wines from the armed forces that had mobilized.

And it was among the hidden casks and cases that he found us a place we might hide in, and we straightway drank deeply of some fine old Burgundy, and this also Diane used to cauterize as best she could my wounded forearm.

"Ah, a jackal bite! I must look out for that Ganz woman," observed Von Karl. "When you reach Paris, my friend, better take no chances—have a Pasteur treatment."

"And how shall we now reach Paris?" Diane put in.

"By bribery, of course," he answered her. "The professional spy has ever that one resource." And he added as he settled himself beside us: "During this war many secret agents will be caught and executed—not many rich ones. Let us rest here placidly for an hour, eh?"

BUT, as it turned out, we were to spend the remainder of the day in our cellar refuge. My arm throbbed painfully and was feverish to a degree that disturbed at least one of my companions. But while Diane played the skilled nurse, Conrad von Karl busied himself with the problems of our present immunity and eventful flight. He had discarded much of his Oriental regalia, and wrapped me in his robe so that he might borrow my coat; and, wraith-like, he came and went, professing to know all that transpired above in the château, and even bringing us water and a little welcome food.

"Swiss chocolate and cheese," he apologized. "I am sorry I left no bread or biscuits in a handy place—or surgical dressings. I should have fully anticipated this emergency. It is growing dusk," he explained, "and I shall soon be able to begin my negotiations."

"The bribe?"

"To obtain a motor-car and other things, yes."

He advised that we take more wine, and also prepare to carry several bottles on our journey. For another hour, while we guessed at our further fate in his company, the Spy Master was absent. I had grown irritable and Diane very restless, and she was vowing to go in search of our errant leader when he rejoined us, in high spirits now, and bearing an electric torch.

"IT IS done," he said. "I have given a Bavarian sergeant major six hundred francs in gold, and to a captain I have given my best imitation of the large emerald," was his boast. And then with the light he let us see him, from cap to polished boots, in German uniform.

"If caught while around here, we should be shot in any case," he pursued, "so the uniform adds no penalty." And he said he had caps and military overcoats for Diane and me, and had even contrived to visit our quarters and gather up a few personal articles he thought we each might want to save.

Antiseptic that he brought for my arm did induce a temporary relief.

Then briskly, in single file, with Diane in the middle, we set forth; and, his torch winking and roving ahead, he guided us out of the cellar retreat, along a musty underground corridor, and up and out of the dark château itself. We crossed to a gardener's now deserted cottage. A battle at Guise would be fought on the morrow—the 29th—Von Karl whispered, so that all but Von Bülow and his immediate staff had left the château, to spend the night close to their commands. And by the cottage we found waiting the great Mors staff car that he proposed to borrow.

DIANE halted us anxiously.

"Some one is there," she said in alarm. "There—in the car!"

It was true. I saw the grim destroyer of our plans. But Von Karl was chuckling, and he proudly revealed his final fugitive masterpiece. A dummy—constructed by him to sit erect in the rear seat of the Mors, imperative, urgent, a "general" at least, requiring the right-of-way at any hour.

Diane must drive, while I was to sit beside her, giving my best imitation of a rigid German orderly. And Von Karl intended to crouch at the dummy's feet, to use his voice and roar authority whenever our German "general" had need to be obeyed. We put on our gray overcoats, and Diane padded her cap to make it fit. Here, too, were goggles for the three of us; and I noted that the dummy had for its face the same mask Von Karl had employed to screen his use of binoculars.

It pleased him when we spoke of the exceeding care and smoothness of all these preparations.

"The imitation emerald and six hundred francs in gold," he reminded us. "And now—are we ready to run for it, my friends?"

Diane vowed she'd drive as never she had before. She recommended that I hold my injured arm against my chest to save it from the jolting. Her dauntless spirit and the stern voice of Von Karl were all we had to rely on in place of the necessary German pass. But she started the car, and unchallenged we rolled out to the highway.

To Arras, then to Amiens and Beauvais, was our dangerous route. A score of times as we sped behind two invading armies we encountered patrols, transport columns, or a lone vehicle rushing upon some swift military errand. If he heard a challenge, Van Karl responded in harsh German, and a further burst of speed sent us on our course again. A bridge guard fired after us, the bullets whining overhead; and once we were hotly pursued, but not for very long. This Mors was a general's racer, in splendid condition—Von Karl had made certain of that—and intended to take all roads at undiminishing pace.

NEAR Amiens we halted. My arm was aching intolerably and the swelling had constantly increased as we bounded through the August night. The Spy Master got out to look at our tires, and pronounced them fit for the final rush. Soon we ought to strike the French line, Manoury's Ninth Army, said he, now on Joffre's extreme left flank.

"And he must have some of his cavalry as far west as this," he added.

"Are you ready?" Diane called out.

"Yes," he answered. "All ready." And we heard him slam the tonneau door. "Keep your heads down. This is the final dash, you know, and there may be Uhlans scouting along this road, feeling out Manoury's advance positions."

Obeying, we crouched anew, and the roar of the motor drowned out his last observation. Noisily we sped along, never glancing back, all in eagerness to plunge through to a post of safety.

Two swift kilometres, and we came to a crossing of the Somme. Horsemen suddenly appeared directly in our path, and when Diane boldly switched on her brighter lamps we saw that they were French.

We had arrived. But they were recognizing a German military motor, and while their startled beasts reared and plunged we slowed down in the very midst of threatening carbines and pistols.

I TURNED back to congratulate Conrad von Karl, our leader. And there sat the precious, stiff dummy. But Von Karl himself had vanished. Where? Why?

"He has gone—we left him behind!" I exclaimed to Diane, but she, having thrown off her German cap, now sputtered in rapid French the news of our uncommon exploit.

When a polite lieutenant appeared, he verified our stories as well as he could. We revealed what we had heard about Von Bülow's impending assault upon Lanrezac's Fifth Army; but this intelligence hardly came in time, it appeared. In an hour the battle at Guise would begin.

Meanwhile, soldiers with torches and lanterns were revealing our pet ruse, the dummy in the general's outfit. But where, indeed, was its creator, Von Karl, the Spy Master?

"I dare say he never meant to come into the French lines," Diane murmured aside to me. "It was rather fine of him, though, to take such trouble to get us safely through to this outpost. He let us believe he had got back into the car, and told us to bend low—being sure we would not then look around. I wonder what he intends to do, alone by the roadside, practically between two hostile armies?"

BUT her reflections were rudely interrupted. The dummy Von Karl had left to ride with us was so entertaining to these weary little troopers that while we awaited the coming of a surgeon who would dress my wound, they lifted our "Boche commandant" from its seat. They exclaimed about its weight, and then discovered another gruesome thing.

The basis of Von Karl's masterly imposture was a human body!

Stripping off the *papier-mâché* mask, they revealed a sallow, sly, and homely face.

"Gretchen Ganz, the château housekeeper!" Diane exclaimed. And so we had to explain further about this woman who had denounced Von Karl and us.

The Spy Master, while we hid away down cellar, had thus contrived to take the "two eyes for an eye" of which he had boasted. He had executed his own capital penalty.

Rigid in death, no wonder our dummy had sat up for us so imperiously!

When the surgeon came, he examined the slain woman with impersonal concern. She had been dead for at least five hours, he thought, having sustained four knife wounds, any one of which would have resulted fatally. And then he proceeded to tend to my arm where the woman's teeth had gashed me to the bone.

*The third of this series, A House of Deep Design, will appear in the January issue of* MYSTERY STORIES.

*"I only meant you wasn't the kind they did," said Sam meekly.*

# Find the Woman

By ELLIS PARKER BUTLER

***In the old days when life was cheap and liquor cheaper, Snake Red was slain. There wouldn't have been much ado about it, for no one especially liked him, but it happened that Law and Order had just been established by unanimous vote of the twelve denizens of Hoogman's Hollow.***

THE greatest trial that was ever held in what is now the State of Oklahoma was that of Sam Banks—name not guaranteed—for the murder of Snake Red—name not guaranteed at all. The bunch had come in early from the north and west and had settled down in this hollow where the creek was, it being rumored that the Territory would be thrown open for homesteaders, and the bunch meaning to be on hand bright and early if no one got wind of them and chased them out with United States rifles.

This Sam Banks had the best hat in the hollow and a neat little calico pony and a pair of moth-eaten sheepskin chaps, and he carried two guns, one on each hip, and was merry and gay and cheerfully in liquor whenever he could get it. When he was lit up he rode hard and yelled his head off and then went to sleep wherever he happened to fall off the pony. Everybody liked him, and he was the most general favorite in the hollow—Hoogman's Hollow, they called it.

Everybody in the bunch guessed that Hoogman's Hollow was going to be a townsite, and it was decided to call the place Sublime City,

and Joe Everdell was the one who sprung the idea that the bunch ought to hang tight together and be the important people of Sublime City and run it the way it ought to be run, when there was a Sublime City to run, and it was generally considered that Hoogman would be the first mayor, because he was the only one who had anything except ponies and what he wore. He had a wife, and he had brought her with him, and he had brought a wagonload of stuff to sell, including chewing tobacco, cartridges and rum—but mostly rum—and he was running the first store, using his wagon and charging terrible prices.

THERE were twenty-two men in the bunch at the beginning, but they were a quarrelsome lot and a couple got shot right at first over which side of the creek the courthouse should be on when it was built, and the ill-feeling kept up until eight had been buried, and then Hoogman called a mass meeting and made a speech and said the killing had to stop or there would not be enough of the bunch left to run Sublime City when there was a Sublime City.

"We've got to organize the Hollow right now," he said, "and have law and order and stop this killing. No more gun shooting at human beings. All in favor of that law say 'Aye!'"

Everybody said it.

"It's a law," declared Hoogman. "All in favor of anybody who kills anybody being hung say 'Aye!'"

Everybody said it.

"It's a law," said Hoogman. "I move that somebody nominate somebody to be sheriff."

"I nominate you," said Sam Banks.

"I been nominated for sheriff," said Hoogman, looking around through his spectacles. "All in favor of me for sheriff say 'Aye!'"

Everybody said it.

"I'm sheriff," said Hoogman, "and, boys, I'll do my best to do my duty. From now on, leave off the shooting, everybody. I've just opened a case of canned salmon over at the store-wagon, and it's for sale at one dollar a can. Meeting is adjourned."

TWO nights after that Sam Banks got on one of his happy drunks and went riding up and down the creek, yelling his head off, and then went galloping over the hill on his spotted pony and quiet settled down over the Hollow. Along in the night some time there must have been the noise of a shot, but nobody heard it.

The next morning Rance Ballard and Tike Vilas went down toward the creek to wash their shirts, and Snake Red's tent wasn't where it had been, but off a distance was Sam Bank's calico pony with the tent all tangled around its hoofs and legs, looking disgusted. Nearby was the late Snake Red, deceased as dead as possible with a bullet in him, and over on the other side of the creek was Sam Banks sleeping off one of the swellest drunks you ever heard about. Rance and Tike went across the creek and sat on Sam and took his guns away from him, and every cartridge in the guns had been shot.

The pressure of Rance and Tike woke up Sam, and he looked at them with the grin he always carried just under the surface of his face.

"You two big lollops go sit on somebody else," he said. "My little tummy is all sore and peevish and don't like to be sat upon just now."

"Don't say nothing more," said Rance. "We warn you that any re-

marks can be used against you. Will you come peaceable or do you have to be drug?"

"What for?" Sam asked.

"Murder," said Tike.

"Who did I murder this time?" Sam asked, grinning.

"Snake Red," said Tike. "And I warn you again that anything you say can be used against you, so you'd better keep your mouth shut and come along to the sheriff without let or hindrance as provided by law."

"Is this serious or are you joshing me, boys?" asked Sam.

"It's the mightiest serious thing you was ever up against in your life, Sam," Rance told him. "What did you have to go and kill that worthless hound for? Don't answer—it can be used against you. Not that it ain't good riddance, but say nothing because it can be used against you."

"Can't remember anything about it, Rance," Sam said. "Was it last night I started in and had such a grand time? You've tooken my guns off me, haven't you? I'll go anywhere you want, Rance, nice and peaceful. What's my pony doing with all that tent wrapped around his legs?"

"Don't ask no questions," Rance warned him. "They might be used against you. Come on, now, Sam, and talk to the sheriff about it, if you want to."

SAM got up and said he had a mighty mean head that morning, and went with Rance and Tike, and when old man Hoogman heard the story he said there was nothing to it but that Sam must be tried for murder, and that the more time they wasted the longer it would take. Everybody had gathered around by then, and Hoogman stood on the tailboard of his wagon.

"Gentlemen," he said, "we've got to go at this business right and legal and try this Sam Banks in good and proper style and the way it ought to be done, and the first thing is to have a judge."

"I nominate you for judge," said Rance Ballard.

"I been nominated for judge," said Hoogman. "All in favor will say 'aye.'"

Everybody said it, including Sam Banks and Mrs. Hoogman.

"You can't vote, ma—you're a female," said Hoogman.

"I thought you wanted I should vote," she said. "I don't want to vote if you don't want me to vote. Voting don't interest me to no great extent. I take my vote back."

"I'm elected, anyway," said Hoogman. "We'll hold court over yonder under the cottonwood. Come along, Sam, and get tried. Fetch the rope over, ma. I dare say we'll need it when the trial is over. Rance, you carry them empty boxes over, you and the boys."

"Can a female woman look in at a trial?" Mrs. Hoogman asked.

"I don't see no reason why not," said Hoogman. "It ain't of no importance one way or another."

So Mrs. Hoogman came over to the cottonwood, bringing the rope and dragging her willow rocking-chair, because she was a huge lady and that was the only thing in the Hollow she could sit in or on and be comfortable. Judge Hoogman stood one box on end for a desk and laid the other down to sit on.

"COURT'S in order and ready to operate," he said. "Gents will take off their hats. The first thing is, who's going to be lawyer for this criminal murderer? How about you, Rance?"

"I don't mind, if it suits Sam,"

said Ballard. "I think he ought to have a say in it."

"It suits me all right," said Sam.

"You and Sam go over yonder and talk over how your defense is going to be planned out," said Judge Hoogman. "Tike, will you run this case for the community and see that that murderer gets hung like he ought to be?"

"Now, I sort of hate to, judge," Tike said. "Sam and me has been such good friends and all. Why don't you ask somebody else?"

"How about you, Snifty?" Hoogman asked another one of the boys.

Snifty was leaning up against the cottonwood, and he stopped to spit before he answered. He was reckoned to be, next to the late deceased, about the meanest and lowest-down buzzard in the bunch, and he had been a sort of pal of this Snake Red's.

"Pleased to," he said. "Give me great pleasure."

"You better go over and have a look at Snake," the judge said, "and make sure how dead he is and how he come by it, and figger up your case against the disreputable manslaughterer, and I'll go ahead and impanel the jury."

Snifty put his hands in his pocket and went down by the creek to have a look at the late Snake Red.

"HICKS, Bendy, Lohmeier," called off the judge, naming the men to be on the jury, "Spotty, Tully, Bowleg—go over yonder and sit in two rows. Diggles, Brownell——"

"About here, judge?" asked Hicks, picking out a place to sit.

"A little more back," said Hoogman. "Vilas——"

He stopped and counted his jury.

"Nine," he said. "I've got to have three more. A jury has got to be twelve men."

"I'll jure for you, pa," offered Mrs. Hoogman.

"I said men," said Hoogman severely. "Females can't jure. Rance, you and Snifty have got to be on jury duty, I guess. You can incriminate and excriminate Sam just as well, can't you?"

"Sure," agreed Rance. "Why not?"

"That's only eleven," said Hoogman, "and there ain't any more. Sam, I guess I'll have to put you on the jury, too."

"It's all the same to me," said Sam. "On or off, I don't care, if I can have a jug of water. I've got a thirst that would make the Sahara Desert ashamed of itself."

"I hate to ask you," Hoogman said. "It's almost too much to ask a man to be criminal and jury both when he's had such a hard night of it, but you see how it is, Sam. I can't get you hanged legal and proper if I ain't got twelve good men and true in the jury box. That's the law of it."

"I don't mind, if I can sit down," Sam said.

"You're sure you can give a just and honest verdict on the evidence and facts as testified to?" asked Hoogman.

"Sure I can," said Sam. "You don't mind if I lay me down and take a little nap whilst proceedings are getting under way, as you might say, judge?"

"Lay down in the jury," advised Hoogman.

By that time Snifty had come back, and Hoogman told him he was drawn for jury duty, and he took his place in the front row, next to Sam, who was asleep in a minute and snoring like an ox.

"THIS case," said Hoogman, pushing his spectacles up on his forehead, "is the case of the town

of Hoogman's Hollow against this Sam Banks for murder and manslaughter in the first, second, and third degrees, because he went and killed Snake Red last night, and we can't have such doings going on around here. The aim of this trial is to hang this Sam Banks to a limb of this cottonwood. Go ahead, Snifty."

Snifty stood up and took a fresh chew of tobacco.

"Well, judge," he said, "I just been over to look at Snake, and he's dead and no doubt about it. He's got a bullet right in him. It looks to me as if it was shot right into him out of a six-gun, and from what I hear it looks like Sam done it. Rance, did you take Sam's guns off him?"

"Yes; me and Tike Vilas did," answered Ballard from the jury row.

"Was they full of ca'tridges or was they empty of ca'tridges, or what?"

"They was full of empty ca'tridges," said Rance. "The ca'tridges that was in them had been shot off."

"Did them empty ca'tridges look as if they had been shot off at Snake Red? Answer yes or no," said Snifty.

"Judge, I claim a foul," objected Rance. "He can't ask me that."

"Did them ca'tridges look the way ca'tridges would look if they had been shot off at Snake Red? Answer yes or no," ordered Snifty.

"Do I have to answer a fool question like that 'yes' or 'no,' judge?" demanded Rance.

"That's the law, the way I understand it," Judge Hoogman told him.

"Yes, then, you blasted poplar," said Rance bitterly.

Snifty looked at the jury as if to say: "Get that, you doggies!" and turned to Rance again.

"You saw this Snake Red this morning when you went down to the creek to wash your shirt, did you?" he asked.

"Yes," said Rance.

"How dead was he?"

"He was plumb tee-total entirely dead," Rance answered.

"Hip-gunned to death, was he?" Snifty asked.

"He was so," Rance agreed.

"Well, now, Mr. Ballard, I ask you this question," said Snifty. "Did he look the way he would have looked if he had been shot to death by the ca'tridges in Sam Bank's hip-guns that looked the way they would have looked if they had been shot off at Snake Red? Answer 'yes' or 'no.'"

Rance gasped for air a couple of times.

"Yes," he said.

"That's all, judge," Snifty said, taking a new bite of plug. "You can cross-examine yourself, Rance. You're your witness."

RANCE scratched the back of his head a minute or so.

"Rance," he said to himself then, "you heard what this bow-legged snoozer asked you, didn't you? Answer 'yes' or 'no.'"

"Yes," he said.

"Are you the all-firedest liar in seven states? Answer 'yes' or 'no.'"

"Yes," he answered himself.

"Do you know anybody on God's green earth that would believe you if you was on oath? Answer 'yes' or 'no,'" he said.

"No," he answered himself.

"The truth is, ain't it," he asked himself, "that you're the most ornery liar that ever lived, and that just the opposite of what you say is dog-sure to be so? Answer 'yes' or 'no.'"

"Yes," he answered.

"That's all I got to ask you," he said, and he sat down

The next witness Snifty called was Tike Vilas, and he made short work of Tike. He asked him if he had seen Sam's pony, and if its feet had been all tangled up in Snake's tent as if Sam had tried to ride right over the tent, and Tike admitted that was so. He asked Tike if Sam Banks had ever quarreled with Snake.

"Sam?" Tike answered. "Why, yes, Snifty, Sam did."

"That's all," said Snifty.

"Tike, you blamed old sooner," said Rance in cross-examination, "don't you know that Snake Red quarreled with everybody in the Hollow, off and on?"

"Sure he did!" Tike answered.

"With you and with me?"

"You know it, Rance."

"With Snifty?"

"I'll say he did!"

"With Judge Hoogman?"

"You bet your boots he did."

"That's all, Tike. Oh, wait a minute! You and me found Sam this morning didn't we? What was he doing?"

"Snoozing," said Tike. "Flat on his back and snoring and snoozing."

"Snoozing away like a poor little innocent babe, wasn't he, Tike?"

"Like a harmless little cooing dove," said Tike.

"That's all," said Rance, and Tike sat down, and Snifty looked around for another witness. He gave it up.

"Judge," he said to Hoogman, "that's my case. I proved that Snake is dead, and if you don't believe it you can go and take another look at him. I proved that there was animosity existing between Snake and Sam, and that's a motive. I proved that Sam had ca'tridges that looked like they shot Snake. That's all the witnesses I've got unless Sam dares to stand up and let me ask him a few, but he's too blamed much of a coward to do so, and I'll bet you a hat he is."

SAM woke up and heard his name. "What does he say, Rance?" he asked his counsel.

"He says you're afraid to stand up and be asked questions, Sam," Rance told him.

"Like thunder I am!" said Sam, getting to his feet. "Go ahead and ask, you poor coyote! I ain't afraid of you nor nobody like you."

Snifty sort of grinned.

"Was you drunk last night, Sam?" he asked.

"Was I drunk? I was howling," said Sam. "I was plumb perfectly spifflicated. Yes, indeedy, and then some more."

"On and after the time when as you got completely lit up, where did you go and be at?" asked Snifty.

"I started out on my pony," said Sam, "and I rode up and down the creek and yelled some, and then I rode up and down the creek, and then I——"

He hesitated and his eyes took on a far-off look.

"How do I know what I did after that?" he asked. "I was drunk, wasn't I?"

"And you don't know where you went or what you did?" Snifty asked him.

"How should I?" Sam asked. "I don't get drunk that way. I get real drunk."

"Just so!" said Snifty. "You don't remember what you did. Like as not you rode your pony into Snake's tent and got mad at him for having his tent where you wanted to ride, and shot him into a deceased condition, didn't you?"

"How do I know?" asked Sam. "Last thing I know I was riding up and down the creek, and the next thing Rance and Tike was waking me up."

"And you admit you maybe plugged Snake, don't you? You could have done it, couldn't you?"

"Sure," said Sam with a sick grin. "Maybe I did."

"Your witness, Rance," said Snifty.

"ONLY, you don't remember it, Sam, do you?" Rance asked.

"I don't remember nothing, Rance," Sam said.

"And your pony might have wandered loose after you fell off him and went to sleep, and he might have stumbled onto Snake's tent by hisself, mightn't he?" Rance asked him.

"Why, no, Rance," Sam said. "He ain't quite that bad a fool. I must have rode him into the tent or he wouldn't have gone into it. He's got good enough sense, that pony has."

"And them ca'tridges in your hip-guns," said Rance. "You sort of remember shooting them all off in the air, don't you?"

"I don't remember nothing, Rance," said Sam sadly.

"Ain't it a fact," asked Rance, "that when this man Snake was shot you was off somewheres else, over on the perary or somewheres?"

"I don't know where I was, Rance," said Sam.

"That's all," said Rance, and Sam sat down and lay back and rolled over on his face and went to sleep again.

"That's my case," said Snifty. "If you ask me, judge, I'll say it's a blame' nice little case, too."

"No doubt about that whatever," agreed Judge Hoogman. "I don't know whether you want to waste time going on with it, Rance, or not. I ain't going to hinder you if you aim to. Law is law, and you've got a right to if you want to."

Rance Ballard stepped out from the jury and put his thumbs in his chaps belt and looked up at limbs of the cottonwood.

"Judge," he said, "that's a blame fine cottonwood. It ain't a oak or it ain't a elm, but it's a fine tree, and a fine tree is one of Nature's grandest works, or I'm a liar. That tree, judge, grew up from a little tender seed, just like Sam yonder grew up from a little tender babe, and now look how the blame' thing spreads its noble branches, giving shade to man and beast, and shade is a blame scarce commodity in this part of the territory.

"Judge, them limbs was meant to hold up leaves to give comfort to beast and man, and shall we disgrace them by hanging beast or man on them? I say 'no'! I say law and justice must take their course, judge, but I say they must take their course according to law and justice and not the way some bow-legged blast of wind like the distinguished counsel, this tobacco-eating Snifty here, tries to make everybody think.

"Judge, you was elected to the high position you've got on that tomato box because you know the law. You've listened to this Snifty shoot off his mouth and ask his fool questions, and you've been real reasonable and patient with him, but I've been looking at you, judge, and I could see in your eye that you saw he was missing the main point and shooting off up the wrong canyon and that it was all you could do to keep from laughing. Judge, you saw right away he had missed the main point, and I give you due credit."

"Well, now, if it comes to that——" said Judge Hoogman, and he coughed behind his hand. "Go right on, Rance."

"You've heard a lot to-day about ca'tridges and ponies and tents and

this and that, judge," Rance continued, "and is Snake dead or not, when any blame' fool knows he's dead or we wouldn't be having a trial over him, but you knew and I knew this Snifty was only trying to hide the main point and throw dust in the eyes of one and all. Because, judge, what is the main rule of law, as every child knows, male or female? You know it and I know it and everybody here knows it and has heard it a thousand times —'find the woman!'"

Rance stopped to get his effect, and somebody in the jury said: "You bet!" in an approving way.

"Any crime and every crime, no matter what crime, that's the first thing the law says to do—find the woman! And, judge, this Snifty knows it as well as you do! And what does he do? Does he ask one single question to find out who the woman is? No, sir! He's afraid to. That's how weak his case is—it don't amount to shucks. Find the woman!"

"Well, of course," said Judge Hoogman apologetically, "I seen that omission all along, but I sort of overlooked it, being as there ain't any woman in the Hollow. Except ma, of course."

"Find the woman!" declared Rance, banging his fist into his hand. "I hold that if you don't find the woman, there ain't no case against Sam in law and justice. I vote that this case against Sam be called off."

THE judge was evidently perplexed. He was saved by a cough that called his attention to Mrs. Hoogman, who was beckoning him to come to her, wiggling her fat forefinger rapidly. He got off his box and walked to where she sat in her capacious rocker, and she whispered to him.

"Well, boys," he said when he had resumed his seat, "Rance is right, but we've got to look at this thing in other ways, too. I could go ahead and make Snifty try this case all over again and have him find the woman, but there's one trouble about that—ma don't like the idea. We got to remember that ma is the only woman we've got in camp or near or far, and she's the only woman to find. And it ain't fair to ma to mix her up in this shindig. That's how ma looks at it, and that's how I look at it, and I'm going to give this here case to the jury and use my right and order them to go forth and deliberate and fetch in a verdict of 'Not Guilty.'"

"That suits me," said Rance, and he led the jury down the creek and behind a tent, first wakening Sam Banks and helping him to get to his feet.

FOR an instructed jury the twelve were absent an unusually long time, and Mrs. Hoogman rocked to and fro although the ground was lumpy under her rockers. The judge got up and walked back and forth, stretching his legs. At length the jury filed up the creek and took their places again in two rows.

"Jury," asked Judge Hoogman, "have you found a verdict?"

Rance stood up.

"Judge," he said, "I hate like sin to have to tell you this, but the only way we could all get together on one verdict was to go sort of counter to what you told us. We done our best, but Sam held out against us and we had to swing over to his side. We find the prisoner guilty."

Mrs. Hoogman was leaning forward in her chair, and now she burst into words.

"My stars!" she exclaimed. "You are a pack of fools!"

"Well, ma'am," said Rance, "you can try what you can do, if you're a mind to. We done our best with Sam, but he was asleep all whilst I made my speech about 'find the woman,' and he won't say anything but it's a pack of nonsense and he don't take no stock in it."

"Yes, ma'am," said Sam. "Snifty sure converted me. He got the proof on me good and plenty. I'm just as like as not to have gone and shot Snake when I was all drunk and disorderly and blank in the mind, ma'am. I couldn't vote no other way when I was a right and proper juryman. Not on the evidence; no, ma'am."

"You got to remember the law says 'find the woman,'" said Judge Hoogman.

"No, sir, judge," said Sam politely. "Mostly, yes, but not here in the Hollow, judge. I know about that thing, judge, because I've read about it in a book I had one time, and it means where there's a lot of nice youngish women around about or good lookers of whatsoever age, judge—the kind of ladies fellers would get jealous about or kill folks to get money to buy dresses for. It don't mean places where the only lady is what you might call adiposed up and almost what you might call grandma age. Folks don't kill folks for that kind, judge."

"OH, THEY don't, don't they?" exclaimed Mrs. Hoogman, getting very red in the face. "A lot you know about it, young man. You set yourself up to know a heap, don't you, and you hardly no more than out of the cradle. I guess it ain't only the skinny young females that men go crazy over."

"I only meant you wasn't the kind they did," said Sam meekly.

"That's all you meant, is it?" snapped Mrs. Hoogman. "Well, let me tell you, then, that you're mighty much mistaken, young man. I shot Snake Simmons myself."

"Marthy!" exclaimed Judge Hoogman in amazement.

"I did so, and I don't blame myself an iota," declared Mrs. Hoogman. "There's plenty you don't know about me, Henry, that happened before you and me ever met, and Snake Simmons is one of them. Men don't go crazy over me, don't they? I was married to Snake many long years before you ever set eyes on me, and he's been pestering the life out of me, telling me he would tell you, until I just had to take a gun to him to shut him up."

"The dirty hound!" exclaimed Mr. Hoogman. "You done right."

"So I guess now," said Mrs. Hoogman, suddenly breaking down and beginning to cry, "you'll have to try me instead of S-Sam!"

"Gosh, I hate to," said Mr. Hoogman uncomfortably.

"Judge," said Rance Ballard then, "I don't see it that way at all. The law is the law, like I said a while back, and it has got to be respected and observed, and when it says 'find the woman' the woman ought to be found. But, judge, that means when it's a man we've caught doing the deed, whatever it is. When it's a woman it's the other way 'round—'find the man.' And, judge, I don't see that we need to worry no more about this case—she found him."

JUDGE HOOGMAN looked more perplexed than ever. He looked from his wife—wife in fact if not in law—to Sam and then to Rance.

"I move that Snake Red Simmons, if that's his name, committed suicide," said Rance.

"You heard the motion," said Judge Hoogman. "All in favor say 'aye.'"

The vote was unanimous.

*"Who screamed just now? Who screamed?"*

# Long Shadows

By KATHARINE HAVILAND TAYLOR

A SERIAL—PART II

WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED:

ANGELICA BURKE, whose mother has just died, is on her way from Europe, where she has lived for years, to Long Shadows, the New Jersey home of her AUNT AGNES. The last day on board ship she meets THEODORE CASSELL, the purser, who tells her of a ghost that haunts Long Shadows on moonless nights, and who gives her a mysterious package and a lot of gossip to retail to her aunt.

ROGER GARRISON, Angelica's oldest cousin, meets her at the dock. She quickly forgets her misgivings at the sight of his kindly face, while he is apparently quite captivated by her beauty and grace. In Philadelphia, on the way out to Long Shadows, they pick up WILLIAM, the youngest of the cousins. He is a rather surly chap, who favors Angelica with unnecessarily long glances, and whom she at once fears. The neighborhood, also, is not especially prepossessing. But when they reach the house and are greeted by Aunt Agnes, a little lady with curling white hair and a cheerful voice which makes an immediate appeal, Angelica dismisses her fears.

At tea she meets PERCIVAL, the third brother, who is not altogether normal, mentally. TOKI, the sleek-haired Japanese servant, arouses a certain feeling of distrust in her. And then she is told that the East Room—which the ghost frequents—has been assigned to her; and since it is raining she realizes that there will be no moon.

**Alone that night, she decides not to go to bed but to read till morning and then to leave the sinister house. Suddenly she sees outside her window a face so white and thin that it suggests a skull. She decides to tap on the wall to call Roger, but the light goes out and she can't remember which way the wall is. Suddenly, though, she knows where the closet door is, for it is outlined by a weird, faint blue light. The door opens, squeaking on its hinges, the light disappears, and something utterly cold closes about her hand. Through sheer terror, she faints.**

**And now go on with the story.**

## CHAPTER IV—(*Continued*)

### THAT NIGHT

WHEN I regained consciousness the electric lights in my room were blazing again, and I was on my bed. I sat up, dizzy and shaking. I gripped my hands against my breast, and that—with the pressure of something hard and strange under them—made me look down.

Some one had slipped over my head a chain that suggested those that convicts wear, and strung upon this were the three Japanese monkeys who point their teaching with covered ears and eyes and mouth. And the same emblem it was that Percival had shown me on the dagger in the drawer of the cabinet—the dagger!

I struggled from the bed, shaking. I reached the wall to pound frantically on it, and in less than half a minute I heard Roger's door close. I opened my door to him. He was blinking and thick with sleep.

"P-poor little g-girl!" he said when he saw me. "N-nightmare?"

"Come in," I whispered.

He stepped over the threshold.

I clung to his arm. "What is it?" I asked.

"N-now, now," he said soothingly. "It's all r-right. It's all over. You'll be all r-right in a m-minute."

I sobbed, and he put his arm around me. Then, holding out the chain with the monkeys, I told him how I had awakened to find that, and how the lights had gone off and something—cold and wet and slimy—had gripped my hand in the dark.

"P-pretty nervous," he said, his small eyes worried.

"Roger," I contested hotly, "it's true! And that—that door *did* open."

He scratched his head.

"The d-door d-does open," he admitted, "b-but what's that?"

I laughed weakly and unsteadily.

"Something is wrong!" I said shrilly. "Something's wrong now—*now!* And I *know* it!"

"I'll g-get some c-cards and we'll p-play rum," he suggested. "N-nothing l-like horses, cards, or w-women to cheer you up. Know, for I've t-tried 'em all."

I ACCOMPANIED him to his room when he went to get the cards, clinging, like any baby, to a fold of his thick bathrobe, which turned him to the shape and hue of an unusually rotund Easter egg. And then, back in that horrible room, we settled by the little table on which I had found the magazines.

Roger dealt the cards.

"Ev-every woman doesn't l-look as n-nice as you do in this s-state," he complimented wickedly.

"But have you seen *every* woman in this state?" I questioned, trying to smile; trying to keep from looking toward the closet door; trying to realize that even a ghost would be nonplussed at Roger's solidity!

"N-not *every* woman, perhaps, dear," he admitted. Then he turned up his cards. But in the middle of

this he paused. "D-dear," he said, "it was a b-bad dream. That ch-chain and those fool m-monkeys were in this bureau drawer. A g-guest left them. Friend of your m-mother's as well as my mother's. Ch-Chester's his name — Blake Ch-Chester. Remember him?"

I did. He had called on us only a little while before my father's sickness. I probably remembered him and his name for that reason, for I had been only about ten at the time.

"You p-probably got up and p-put 'em on yourself," Roger went on. "Y-you said you had nightmares, and you're pretty nervous. You d-don't eat enough, for one thing. I w-watched you at d-dinner."

"Percival watched me too," I thought, "but—differently!"

I said a definite, low, steady "It was neither imagination nor nightmare."

"W-we'll t-talk of it to-morrow, dear," said Roger soothingly.

I looked at the clock. Three. In a little while the dawn would make a pale silver streak to the east, and then, I thought—fatuously, as I found later—my troubles would be over.

At four I leaned across the table to lay my hand on Roger's.

"Go to bed now," I said. "I'm quite myself. And you've been a darling."

"To st-stick around with y-you?" Roger questioned, smiling.

I nodded, smiling back at him. And I insisted that he go.

At length, persuaded that I really was my normal self, he stood up.

"Of c-course you'll k-kiss your c-cousin good morning!" he said, and, laughing, I did.

At the door he said: "I th-thank you for a w-wonderful night!"

And then he disappeared. I sat down by my window, my eyes searching the sky for the dawn. At length a silver ribbon stretched across the east. I watched it widen and a pink glow color it. More rain, I supposed, watching the pink sky, and no moon that night. But I would be far from the East Room, where the ghost stalked on black nights.

When the light was strong enough to penetrate every corner of my room, I crept into bed, and after a half-hour of trembling I slept, soddenly and heavily.

When I woke I saw my aunt by my bed. She was ashen pale, even to her lips, which were usually a pretty carmine.

"Darling," she said, her voice trembling, "so sorry, but—you'll have to get up to testify. Something quite dreadful has happened, and your light was seen on at the hour when it happened. But there is"—she had to stop to gasp enough breath to carry her next words—"no need for alarm, of course. But if you'll make such haste as you can . . . The men, you see, are waiting."

I sat up in bed. "What has happened?" I questioned.

## CHAPTER V

### MORNING

SHE told me bluntly. "One of my very old friends," she said, "has been inconsiderate enough to commit suicide on my front porch."

"What?" I asked stupidly.

"Blake Chester, an old friend, killed himself here last night. Nice idea?" She smiled grimly after her statement and question, but her lips trembled. "Of course," she went on, "there's a pretty to-do this morning. Every one asking why he selected *my* front porch."

"What do they want of me?" I asked.

"Oh, the usual questions," she explained. "Fools would rather ask a million dozen questions than use their minds, and men in uniforms are nearly always fools. They get to thinking too much of their uniforms and to relying on them." She dropped into a chair, and here, rocking, she continued. "Unfortunately," she told me, "Doctor Higsby went by here last night at one, which was about the time the long-winded coroner thinks Blake died. And Higsby saw the light in your window and wondered about it. Then he said the light went out and the front door opened—the old fool!"

I felt the color drain from my face.

"The door-bell rang then," I said breathlessly. "I heard it."

My aunt answered me excitedly. "Darling," she said, "*don't* say that, because the door-bell has been out of order for two days, and it's known in town. We've telephoned everywhere to have a man come out and repair it, but the only effective door-bell repairer has been laid up by an attack of bootleg gin—which Higsby is calling 'ptomaine,' as the man's an elder in the Methodist church or something. So watch your testimony."

"But," I whispered, "I *heard* it."

My aunt gave me a worried look; then she closed her eyes for a moment, and I saw her set her teeth on her lower lip. At length she spoke. "You could not have heard it," she said gently but firmly. She stood up. "I'm going to have young Field come out to look you over," she ended. "You're naturally nervous and upset. He's the best within hail. I sometimes have him out to quiet Percy. You're naturally nervous and upset," she repeated, "and we can't have you made ill by all this—casual suiciding on the front porch!"

I DRESSED, but not as quickly as I wanted to, because I had ten thick thumbs, instead of my usual two rather obedient thumbs and eight agile fingers. In the midst of my dressing I heard a tap on my door, and after I'd slipped into a negligée I opened it to admit Roger, who was white and worried-looking.

"Just a m-moment," he said, without further greeting. He closed the door firmly after himself. "It's th-this," he explained. "P-Percival says he sh-showed you the d-dagger last night with which Ch-Chester killed himself."

"The one with the monkeys on it?" I questioned.

"Y-yes — n-not so l-loud, dear!" He sent an anxious look toward the door. "It happens to b-be mine. H-how Ch-Chester g-got it, only G-God knows! I don't. And I don't w-want to have to be d-dragged in that way. Y-you never s-saw it. That's all."

I nodded.

"W-willing?" he asked. "I d-don't want to ask you to d-do anything you're not w-willing to do."

"Roger," I said, "I'd do *anything* for you!" And I meant it with all my heart. He clasped my hand and kissed it. And it seemed to me that he was more triumphant than touched. I realized, though, that I was growing suspicious of every one—every one! Then he faltered: "Y-you're very s-sweet!" and I was reassured. One could not help but be reassured by Roger, with his sparse, downy yellow hair and his fat, bland face and his innumerable hesitations.

"P-Percival is quite upset," he offered next, with rather an amazing calm.

I laughed weakly. "Why not?" I asked.

"W-well," he answered, "unfortunately, d-death is not so uncommon to m-me that it s-startles me."

"But this sort, Roger!" I objected.

"P-people are always suiciding," he pointed out. "W-watch the papers, if you d-don't believe me!"

MY DRESSING finished, I went down to the drawing room, which, as Mr. Cassell had said, was very gay and pretty. Here were three officials of the law, my aunt, William, Roger, Toki, and the maid, Janette, whom I had not seen before. I found her face the hardest I had ever looked upon. Indeed, after a glance at her, I turned my eyes anywhere else! She was a spare, lean, large-boned woman of fifty odd, I judged, whose rugged strength was told by one look at her, and whose hook-nose, sharp chin, and beady eyes all seemed to have been marked by tragedy.

"Miss——?" one of the officials interrogated as I sank into the chair that my aunt indicated by a wave of her hand.

"Angelica Burke," I supplied.

"Niece of Mrs. Horace Garrison," another supplied, and for a moment there was the scratching sound that is made by a pen running across paper. I took my oath, and then a mean-faced, little-eyed man stood up to hold before my troubled eyes a dagger that was stained with blood up to the hilt, and that had on its short, strong handle three small monkeys with six paws before two ears, two eyes, one mouth.

"Have you ever seen this before, Miss Burke?" I heard.

I gasped and faltered: "No."

"Are you sure? Are you *very* certain? The testimony seems weak."

"I'm nervous," I explained.

The man who had put the question turned the dagger over on the table around which we were seated.

"Will you tell me why," he went on, "your mother placed upon the back of all her letters that came to this post office a seal made of wax and a stamp of this emblem?"

"She didn't," I testified.

The questioning man raised his brows.

"You were awake at the time of Mr. Blake's death?" he asked next.

"Yes," I heard myself say.

"Why?"

I answered: "I couldn't sleep. I was nervous."

Then came: "Why were you nervous?"

"I had been told of the ghost that haunts the East Room of 'Long Shadows'," I responded, glad to be able to tell the truth and resolved to do it as fully as I could.

"Who told you?"

"Mr. Theodore Cassell, purser of the steamship *Atlantis*," I stated.

"Where is he now?"

"I don't know," I answered.

"Are you sure? Answer carefully, please."

"I BADE him good-by in New York," I said with some surprise. "I don't know how I could know where he is. I met him only at the end of my voyage, and I talked with him only once—no, twice," I corrected myself.

"Do you know that he has disappeared?" the man with the small, mean eyes asked of me. "And oddly enough," he went on, "a man in uniform debarked in Grant's meadow from an airplane, wandered through the town, and was seen at the station and the telegraph office. He took the road that leads this way from town, and has not since then been seen. And the *Atlantis* reports

that he has not been on board since yesterday morning, although in port it is his habit to live aboard."

I thought, through my confusion, that they had learned a good deal. I wondered how.

"Mr. Cassell, we also learned," my especially attentive friend went on, "was much infatuated with Miss Burke. His fellow officers were amused over the affair, of which he talked frankly during the voyage. I talked of this over the telephone with the captain this morning as I verified the fact that Miss Burke had come over on the *Atlantis*."

Again he moved the dagger.

"DID you know the deceased?" some one asked next.

"I met him only once, when I was a child of ten," I responded promptly.

"Where?"

"At Aix le Bain, as I remember," I stated.

"Immaterial," another officer put in.

The ferret-faced man with the small eyes frowned. Then he said: "He saw — your mother or your father?"

"Both, but he saw more of my father."

"Did you hear any strange noises last night, Miss Burke?"

"Yes."

"Will you tell us, please, exactly what you heard? Take your time, and be careful to maintain a strict regard for the truth."

"Sh-she is on oath," Roger put in rather resentfully, and I wondered whether he had forgotten that I had testified that I had never seen the dagger which lay on the table!

"I went to bed—or, rather, I went upstairs at twelve," I said. "I sat down to read. I was nervous, as I have said, about the ghost." There was a general smile. "At one I thought of what I had heard—that the ghost walks at two. Then—*I heard the door-bell.*" I said this loudly because of my aunt, whose eyes were telling me I was a fool.

"H'm," said the ferret-faced man. "Proceed, Miss Burke."

"Some one went downstairs," I half whispered. "I heard the closing of the door. Then that same person came up again and tried my door; I saw the knob turn."

"And you didn't scream," said the ferret-faced official. "Rare bravery, Miss Burke!"

I flushed and went on: "I then went over to the wall between that room and my cousin Roger's. He had said that if I were nervous, I should pound twice upon it, and he would come. I was going to tap twice——" I paused.

"Why didn't you?" came then, like the crack of a whip.

"I—I saw a face at the window," I faltered.

The ferret-faced man leaned across the table, his eyes narrowed, his lips straight. Every one in the room was tense, some sitting forward, some rigidly back.

"Would you know the face if you saw it again?" I was asked, by whom I don't know.

I said: "I think I would."

THE man who had been asking most of the questions—the ferret-faced man—stood up.

"This way, please, Miss Burke," he said decisively.

I followed him, with the other three officers, out into the main hall, back and into a small, dark room. Here he switched on an electric light, and I saw the body stretched out upon a leather-covered lounge, under a sheet. One of the officers drew away a corner of the sheet. The face I looked upon was the same that had peered at me through

my window — emaciated, gaunt, haunted-looking; seeming fearfully intent upon some scheme that was brutal, terrifying, bad.

"That is the face I saw," I gasped, as they waited, watching me with entire concentration.

"Did you know he left a card poked under the door for you, Miss Burke?" asked the man who I learned later was Mr. Sam Smith, and whom I had thought of as the ferret-faced man.

I turned to him with surprise as he fumbled in his pocket. He held the card so that I might look at it, and upon it was written in a small, legible writing:

> With the hope that this lessening of Miss Angelica Burke's duties will give to her a restful visit to the States.

"I don't understand," I said slowly.

"My God, she doesn't!" said one of the supporters of Sam Smith.

Sam Smith said: "Look out for beauty in distress, Barlow; it is the snag that catches us, makes us trip."

Then he said to me, and in another tone: "This will be all this morning, Miss Burke; only, we shall have to look over your room."

I said, head high, that they were welcome to look at anything of mine and to know anything of me. Then I went into the hall, where I met my aunt.

"Better get your purse," she said in a warning undertone. "Don't tell *me* they aren't criminals themselves!"

"I have it," said Janette, back of my aunt. She held it out to me, and I took it from her with a "Thank you."

"Doctor Field is coming soon," my aunt went on, after a nod to Janette. "Go into the library. It's brightest and most cheerful there. Toki will bring you your breakfast. And William will have his with you. He didn't get up early, either. He didn't sleep well."

I FOUND William awaiting me in the library. I noticed his weariness. He was sagged back in a chair as I came in, and after my "Don't get up, please," he sagged back deeper. For a little time he kept his eyes closed, and as he sat thus I studied him. Suddenly my heart skipped a beat, for on his neck—to the side and under his chin—were some spatters of *blood*.

"I didn't have time to bathe this morning," I heard myself saying, and—how I waited!

"Didn't, either," he answered in a slack, weak voice. "Just threw my clothes on. Odd about Cassell, isn't it? If it was Cassell I saw yesterday." He opened his eyes to meet mine frankly. "Angelica," he said, "there's something odd and—*bad*—about this house. What is it?"

"How should I know?" I questioned in turn, and stridently. My eyes were on his chin, with the hope that he would raise it just a little—as he had before—so that I might see again the little spatter of blood.

Toki came in wheeling a tea cart.

"Excuse me to speak," he said, and I thought I caught an undercurrent sneer. "Something bad about house, and Mr. William does not to know it?"

"Damned if I do!" said William.

"Maybe plumbing," said Toki.

William's eyes were again closed. He did not see the flash of murderous hate that came to me from Toki's eyes. But *I* saw it!

"Funny kind of humor those chaps have," William murmured after Toki had served us and gone. "He made a long tale for me the other day about an old lady who had been slashed to ribbons as a

punishment because her niece had done wrong. Then he laughed. "Odd, you know."

There was a noise at the door. Janette was there, smiling.

"Miss Burke," she said, "is wanted upstairs."

I went up. Mr. Smith stood in my room, before the long mirror, on which, the day before, I had found the picture drawn in the dust.

"Will you explain this, Miss Burke?" he asked.

I drew near. There were spots of blood upon the mirror.

"I cannot," I said.

"Was it there when you dressed?"

"I don't know."

"Sit down," said Mr. Smith. Then he shook my bed-clothes, and as he did so, the chain with the three monkeys on it dropped to the floor.

"Charming trinket!" he stated. "Fond of that emblem, aren't you, Miss Burke?"

I thought I couldn't stand much more.

"It isn't mine!" I said. "It isn't *mine!*" And I heard myself wail this again and again.

Janette appeared in the doorway, and Roger followed her a second later. His step, on the thick rug, was so light that she did not hear it. She moistened her thin lips twice, and then she spoke, hate on her face.

"I lied," she said. "She left her room"—she pointed to me—"at one last night, and she went downstairs. *I saw her!*"

"*You* lie now," said Roger. "I was with her nearly all night."

I FELT myself turn crimson and then pale. And then back of Roger appeared a tall, strong-faced man I had not seen before. Sam Smith bowed.

"'Morning, Dr. Field," he said.

Dr. Field answered his greeting pleasantly without looking away from me.

"When you gentlemen are through, I'll take charge," he said. "More or less upsetting to have a suicide on one's front step."

I felt that he would save me—why, I don't know. I only know that the sudden relief made my head swim. Dully I heard his voice, grown sharp, saying: "You'll never get the truth from any one in this physical condition, Smith. She'll see you later."

THEN I heard nothing, because for the second time I fainted in the East Room. When I regained the power to hear and to see, I opened my eyes but a slit to find Dr. Field looking at the bit of paper that bore the names of the principal characters in Mr. Cassell's tales. Dr. Field must have found this in the purse I had been carrying when I fainted. He pocketed it; but he was only my physician—and not a spy—when I allowed him to know that I was capable of observing once again.

"Well," he said, drawing a chair up to the bedside, "let's begin by feeling your pulse, Miss Burke. Still pretty sick?"

I nodded, and tears filled my eyes. Seeing them, he frowned.

"Just come over?" he asked.

I nodded again, and one of the tears freed itself from my lashes to slip down my cheek. I wiped it away with the back of one hand, and he sat frowning down at me, quite evidently lost in his own thought.

Suddenly he leaned forward and so close to me that his whisper was clear.

"I know of it," he said, "all about it, through my aunt—God help the poor lady! All about your trouble, and the trouble here."

I sat up in bed. "I don't know what you're talking about," I said shrilly.

Again he sat back, frowning. Then he fumbled in his pocket for the slip of paper he had taken from my purse.

"Where did you get these?" he asked.

I told him.

"Why did Cassell give them to you?" he asked next.

I told him that.

His lips grew a narrow slit. He stared down at the list of names.

"Are you willing to have me keep this?" he asked.

I said, "Why not?"

He moved suddenly. "My God!" he said. "You poor child!" He put his hand over mine. I turned my hand until my fingers could cling to his.

"Something is wrong in this house," I said. "I don't know what. But it *is* wrong."

"Quite certainly," he answered grimly.

AS HE heard feet on the stair he got out a stethoscope. And I found myself so, in league with him and against—I don't know what.

"Take a deep breath," he said, as William came into my room after a short knock on the opened door.

"If I may come in——" said William. "There's more news. I wanted Angelica to know. I think it's *best* for Angelica to know——"

"Then why not tell her?" said Dr. Field. Again his hand closed around my wrist. He had taken my pulse, but I was glad there was a manner of pretense through which I could feel his reassuring touch.

"But," I thought, "Roger at first made me feel safe. This, too, may pass."

"What has happened, is this——" began William.

## CHAPTER VI

### THREE LETTERS

WILLIAM drew a long breath. His expression was pleased, even happy.

"Well," he said, "Blake Chester's bank-box has been opened in the hope that it might give us a clue as to why he selected our front porch for his suicide; and the opening of his box has given the clue."

"Indeed!" said Dr. Field as he took his fingers from my wrist—rather unwillingly, I felt.

"Yes," William answered. He paused, moistened his lips, and then went on. "There was a letter in that box from Angelica's father. I have a copy of its wording here." He fumbled in his pocket. "It reads——" He went on after he had brought out a slip of paper: "'My wife must know, from my actions, that I know of what your relation with her has been. I think I can promise that you will not be bothered about it by her again. There is nothing more to be said.'" And then William read in a louder voice my father's name: "'Patrick Burke.'"

I closed my eyes; my head swam.

"It looks," said William, as he folded the paper and slipped it into one of his pockets, "as if Angelica were Blake Chester's daughter. Blake Chester was attentive to your mother up to the time of her marriage, and he saw her often after. My mother has had to acknowledge that."

I said weakly: "It isn't true."

"But every one who knew your mother at all well knows that your father died hating her," William pointed out. "My mother has had countless letters that are full of her despair."

Again I closed my eyes.

"Then, too," he continued, "her using that odd little emblem of the three monkeys—which Chester used also—that's another link."

"But that emblem was on a dagger that Roger told me was his, and my mother did not use it. I posted too many of her letters not to know of any seal on them," I said again. "It isn't true."

"It explains, also," William went on, without heeding me, "that card Chester left for *you*, Angelica." He paused a moment. "Tell me," he questioned bluntly, "did you know of it, and were you bothering him about it?"

"Is it the sort of situation that a girl of any pride would emphasize?" I questioned, my voice hard.

"Well, no," William agreed slowly. "But Chester had a large fortune——"

"Are you suggesting that I would use such a fact for the purpose of blackmail?" I asked William.

He hesitated. "You might feel that he owed you decent support!" he exclaimed.

I HAD risen a little in bed to rest on my elbow. I sank back again. Doctor Field shook down his thermometer.

"Toki," he called, turning his face toward the doorway.

"He's not upstairs, I think," William said, "but I'll call him if you like."

"He is upstairs," Doctor Field contradicted, "and not far from this door. I want this thermometer washed." How did Doctor Field know Toki was upstairs, I wondered.

William hurried to the doorway. "Toki," he called, and in a moment Toki appeared, and I noticed that his lean, strong hands shook when he took the thermometer from Doctor Field.

"In a way, this explanation makes it easier," said William. "There is no proof, you see, that Angelica did bother Chester, and the whole affair may be put down to his remorse."

I lay thinking that I would clear my mother's name of that charge if it took my life to do so.

"Sam Smith is quite satisfied," William added, as he turned toward the door.

"Well, that's good," Doctor Field murmured. I felt a little irony in his tone. "But," he added, as Toki reappeared with the thermometer, which rested on a towel, "I don't believe *this* explanation, and I have reasons for not believing it. All truth comes out eventually—glaring and plain—even if only one dull person keeps blowing the dust from it. Do *you* know that?" he ended, looking at Toki.

"Possible so," Toki conceded.

I saw him tremble. And I saw him standing before the doctor like a hypnotized small rabbit before a snake. Doctor Field slipped the thermometer Toki had washed into a silver case. He smiled at Toki as he did it.

"You did not get that quite clean," he said suavely, "so I'll use the emergency thermometer I carry with me. That *is* clean." He put it between my lips. "And I'll have some tablets for Miss Burke that I shall ask Toki to slip into town to pick up at my office. In fact, he can motor in with me and bring them back."

"Certainly," agreed William, who had reached the doorway and paused there.

I saw Toki's trembling increase.

"Then," Doctor Field stated, "Miss Burke will have a fair chance of becoming her own healthy self again in short order." He stood up. "Quiet, rest and cheerful surroundings," he ordered.

I ventured: "There is no real proof that my father wrote that letter, is there?"

William said: "It is to be compared by handwriting experts with the few letters we have from your father. We are sending these in to Philadelphia with Smith, who is going by motor."

"Doubtless you have often heard the story of the tortoise and the hare," Doctor Field said slowly and smoothly, "and it often happens that the amiable, doddering man in the Ford reaches the truth before the sleuth in the Rolls Royce."

"But *you* happen to have a Rolls Royce and Smith a Ford," William pointed out.

"William, it is not quite kind of you to decide instantly that I meant myself when I spoke of a man who was 'amiable and doddering,'" Doctor Field said, still in that smooth voice which I felt was not his most natural one.

William laughed embarrassedly.

"How's Percival?" Doctor Field asked next in a vibrant, energetic tone that I, somehow, knew to be his own.

"Not very well," William admitted.

"Didn't sleep, did he?"

"No, not much."

"Well, what upset him?"

"Oh, I suppose the storm."

"Um . . . it *was* bad. . . . What in the world made you go out in it last night?" he asked suddenly, after he had picked up his small bag.

William lost every vestige of color.

"I?" he said, too loudly.

"Exactly. You."

"Why," William said excitedly, "*I* didn't go out!"

Doctor Field raised his brows. Then he said: "I'll happen in this afternoon, Miss Burke, and meantime I want you to know that everything is *quite all right.* When you feel like it get up and play solitaire or the piano or—whatever you do play. And eat as much as you can and think as little as is possible. And as for this cock-and-bull story about your mother—well, dismiss it! It's rot, you know, and, as I said, all truth comes out eventually. Ready, Toki?"

"Quite ready, sir," Toki answered, and his teeth chattered from his shivering.

"Suppose you bring along that solution in which you washed my thermometer," Doctor Field went on. "I'm interested in new—ah—solutions and disinfectants. Quite kills all germs, doesn't it, Toki?"

"Very effective," Toki agreed evenly. He disappeared then, and in a second Doctor Field followed him. I heard Doctor Field's voice, curt and strong, and then I heard him go down the front stairs, followed by Toki. From outside I heard the soft purr of a powerful motor, the grind of brakes, and after that silence.

MY AUNT came in, and I saw that she had been crying.

"I can't believe this," she said as she settled by my bed. "Angelica, you don't think it's true? William told me he had told you of it. He thought he should."

"It's untrue," I stated.

Janette came in with some tea and a wafer on a little tray. She glanced at me once with absolute murder in her eyes. She said to my aunt: "This has close to killed Mr. Percival. He can't stop crying. He asks to see Miss Angelica."

"Later, Janette," said my aunt. "She's hardly fit to see him now."

Janette nodded and left. I was glad to see her go.

"Can you remember your mother

ever having spoken of Blake Chester?" my aunt asked.

"She spoke of him often," I admitted honestly, "but always so happily, Aunt Agnes, and so—openly. My father used to pretend jealousy over the way she talked of him and the good times that you all had here."

My aunt nodded. Then she sighed. "It's all very strange and perturbing," she admitted. "I can't imagine that of your mother, Angelica. She was so—so healthy and young always. I think a burdened conscience would have killed her early."

"I know it would," I asserted.

"But you say your father turned against her after his intimacy began with Blake Chester?"

I had to admit this.

"Well," she murmured, "all we can do is to forget." For a moment she sat silent, and then she spoke again: "And to know that one can use life as one likes—make of it what one will. . . . And you must do that, Angelica. There are many ways"—she leaned forward to lay her hand on mine—"for you to be useful and happy here—with us."

I gripped her hand. I did love her, but I did not want to be useful at Long Shadows, and, furthermore, I was sure I could not be, for I knew that I could not be happy there. And no one can be useful who adds to the world's gloom.

"ROGER'S very much perturbed about you, dear," my aunt told me. "I hated his having to say what he did about—about being with you all the night. But he said he did it fearing so much worse for you than a damaged reputation."

"Oh—that!" I said. It didn't matter—then.

"Quite upset and perturbed," she repeated.

"Has he gone to town?" I asked, for I had already learned that Roger had a brokerage office in the city. In fact, during my mother's life he had lived in Philadelphia, and most of the letters my mother had written Aunt Agnes had been posted to Philadelphia, as Aunt Agnes frequently stayed there, in Roger's small apartment, with him.

"Yes, he's gone," my aunt answered. "He felt that work would do him good. I think he's more upset, poor boy, over what he said of being with you here than over any other phase of this whole affair." And she smiled amusedly, but compassionately, as she spoke. "William's going in to hear the latest developments of the affair of last night. He and Roger will have luncheon together."

"If William hasn't left, I'll ask him to carry a note to Roger for me," I said, sitting up in bed. "I don't want Roger to be worried on my account, even for one day."

"That would be very sweet of you if you feel able, but it's not necessary, dear," my aunt deprecated.

I told her it would be no trouble, and, slipping from bed, I went over to a small desk where, on paper that was decorated with an engraved "Long Shadows," I wrote:

> ROGER DEAR:
>
> Don't be worried over having told the truth about me last night. I am sure our being cousins will make our having been together seem all right.
>
> With love,
>
> ANGELICA.

I held it out to my aunt. She read it and smiled.

"You're a dear child," she commented, "and when you cheer Roger up in this way and give him a message of this sort, you *are* being useful!"

Then again she patted my hand and stood up.

"If you feel able to visit Percival later in the day, it will help us all out," she admitted. "He gets morbid, and during those times he wants what he wants when he wants it, and now—he wants to see *you*."

"I'll be glad to go to see him," I answered—which was a lie, of course, but I considered it to be of the white variety.

I WENT downstairs at about noon, and I shuddered as I looked down the hall toward that door which, earlier in the day, had opened to show me the body of Blake Chester, whose thoughts had —somehow—been turned to me; and who had, in some way, shattered that peace and the beautiful, mutually given love that had made the relation between my mother and my father all that it had been until the last cruel months of my father's life.

That is, Blake Chester had shattered it if that letter was truly written in my father's handwriting. I would know, of course, when William and Roger came home—dear Roger, who had worried so about me and over having said what he had. I was glad I had written him. I could imagine the lighting-up of his child-like, chubby face as he read my words.

I turned toward the drawing-room, where a little fire was burning, and where something of the pervasive gloom of the gray day was dispelled by that and by the homelike charm of the room.

I would do as Doctor Field had ordered. I would play what I could play, and I would try not to think. I settled before the piano. The first few chords came clear, but the next were mute. Something was lying on the strings; but in the grand piano this something was within my reach. Without a thought of fear, I lifted the lid and slid a groping hand under the heavy top. A paper came out first. Why I read the scrawled words on it, I don't know, but I did read them. They were: "C. getting too intimate with C.—watch it." And as I read that, the paper crumbled and went to nothing in my hand. It simply disappeared into the air. But paper, I realized, could be so treated that it would do that, and that phenomenon I could dismiss, but not the message.

"C. getting too intimate with C." Cassell? Chester? I wondered.

I reached beneath the lid again. This time my hand closed around something larger and thicker, which I found, on drawing it out, to be a sealed envelope that had engraved on its back Blake Chester's name and address. I closed the piano.

SHAKING, I decided I would open that. I had torn a corner when I heard voices in the hall. I stuffed the envelope down the front of my dress as my aunt came into the room, followed by a lank boy with the most unpleasant face I had ever seen. The boy wore a khaki-colored uniform.

"Angelica," said my aunt, "this is one of William's right-hand men at the telegraph office. I am much interested in all of William's employees, and particularly in Roy."

I couldn't see why she should be. For about once or twice in a lifetime even the most sheltered and innocent woman will meet a look that is so frankly lewd and vicious that she cannot miss its meaning. This boy—of seventeen or so, I thought—stood looking at me, his lips slack and his eyes avid and glistening. I saw him run his tongue over his loose, sagging lips.

My aunt turned to draw up a chair, and he looked me up and down.

I nodded to him. "If you'll excuse me," I said to my aunt, "I'll go upstairs to rest a bit before luncheon."

"A very good idea, my dear," she said in her soft, loving way, and she looked at me anxiously.

In the hall I met Toki.

"Have very good medicine from good doctor for patient," he said. "Also promise him good care of patient." He bowed, smiling at me, and my suspicions of him vanished.

"Toki," I questioned in an undertone, "do *you* know what the wrong and horrible thing is that haunts this house?"

"Have idea," he answered after a careful look up the stair and down the hall.

THEN there was an almost brutal pounding on the front door. I jumped, and after a sudden startled move Toki opened it. Outside was a shambling, unkempt individual who wore what must, it seemed to me, have been a week's growth of beard.

"I come to fix the doorbell," he announced, "Deacon Tyler not bein' able to be about as yet."

"Come in," invited Toki.

I began to mount the stairs as quickly as I could. Above and in the East Room, I would lock my door and then see what was in the envelope that was stamped with Blake Chester's name.

When I reached my room Janette was dusting the rungs of a chair.

"I'll be done in a minute," she said, after she had looked at me through narrowed eyelids.

I sat down by the table and pretended to read. I knew she watched me as she worked.

"Funny how that blood come on your mirror," she said.

I made no response. I heard her sniff.

"And on that there handkerchief, too, in your bureau drawer, which was left open so nobody could help but see."

I looked up with surprise. She laughed.

"Roger had a nose-bleed, too, last night," she said, "or—so he *said*."

She moved the magazines on the table by me aggressively.

"I hadn't any nose-bleed," I said. "I never do. I don't understand about the handkerchief."

"No?" she questioned. She moved to my bureau and reached into the top drawer to bring out one of my handkerchiefs which was monogrammed with my initials and which was stiffened with dried blood and tinted by it to the brownish, brick-red hue that turns the sensitive ill.

I stared at it stupidly, and Janette's brows drew close as she stared at me.

"Lass," she said suddenly, and her voice was softened and changed, "are you truly knowing nothing of it?"

"*Nothing*, Janette!" I gasped.

I think she believed me for that moment. It seemed so, for she laid a roughened, strong, bony hand on my shoulder.

"Well, if that's God's truth, you walk cautious," she advised. She picked up her dust-cloth and moved toward the doorway. In a moment I would be alone with the letter. I waited, tense.

I HEARD footsteps on the stair. My aunt was coming up.

"Dear," she said from the doorway, "would you be willing to hold some wool while I wind it? I've started a shawl. Nothing so soothing—in times of suicide—as knitting a shawl!"

I said a weak "Certainly."

She was looking at the front of my dess, I thought. Was the print of that envelope showing through my thin crêpe-de-chine? It was, for she shook her finger at me.

"You sly child! You have a lover! Only a lover's letters go above the heart. Come, tell me about him now, while we wind. I suppose he's handsomer and cleverer and better than any other man on earth? They all are, these lovers! It's warmer in my room, dear, so I think we'll go there if you will."

I followed her, one hand on the letter that was engraved with Blake Chester's name and address.

"Take that chair," she said with a wave toward a small rocker by a window. I settled while she hunted for her wool. "Nice shade?" she questioned as she brought it out. I said it was. She said: "I like the peace that is in most shades of lavender. Now, look at that snarl! Like to kill the manufacturer who lets a thing like that go through! Roughens up as one untangles it—bound to show in one's knitting. Do you knit?"

I said I had during war-time.

OUTSIDE in the hall I heard the clump of heavy boots.

"I'm having that man look over all the bells," said my aunt. "For some reason——" Another tangle came in her wool, and she paused, frowning, as she unraveled it. "For some reason," she repeated, "the bell in the East Room doesn't always register on the board nor make any sound, when all the rest ring perfectly. And, by the way, Angelica, do you think there's anything—a little *strange* about Toki?" She faced me anxiously as she ended.

I said a non-committal "I don't know."

Her frown increased. "Well, perhaps," she admitted, "one is apt to distrust the Orientals because one is a little stupid about sensing their ways. But why, for instance, does he dust my piano every free moment of his day? I declare, I sometimes think there'll be nothing left of it!"

What did that mean, I questioned of myself. But—heavens! what did anything mean now? The last of the wool slipped from my spread fingers.

Free at last to open the letter I stood up.

Below us, the gong rang for luncheon. Janette was again in my room—this time washing the windows. I put my hand on the letter.

"After luncheon," I promised myself, as I unwillingly went down the stairs.

## CHAPTER VII

### PERCIVAL'S CHAMBERS

N THE hall we passed the man who had been attending to the bells.

"Your bells is in order now, Missus," he stated.

Aunt Agnes nodded slightly as she said a crisp "Thank you."

Then he clumped past us toward the front of the house and out.

"There are no servants' entrances in the States," said my aunt as we settled across from each other at a table that was most charmingly arranged for two. Toki brought in eggs Benedictine, an aspic, coffee, and deliciously salty small wafers. And as we were eating he entered to say: "Excuse to speak. Deacon Tyler telephone that he is able to come fix bells if now required."

"Tell the fool he has sent a man!" my aunt stated with some acidity.

"Have told Deacon Tyler he have sent representative, and he con-

tradict most strongly," Toki answered.

I saw my aunt's color fade. "Will you please tell me what *that* means?" she asked of me.

I shook my head, wondering at her perturbation, which she soon explained.

"A spy," she said, "and—set on *you*. And, if I'm not wrong, Blake Chester is now doing some roasting for all the trouble he's caused and may yet cause you. I'll speak to Tyler, Toki."

She got up and hurried toward the telephone cabinet which was in a rear, dark hall. I pushed away my plate.

Toki said: "I very good friend with Doctor now."

But what did that mean to me—from Toki, who gave every waking hour that he could snatch to the dusting of that piano? And where was I to turn for truth, and how was I to know truth when I found it?

MY AUNT came back, flushed and tight-lipped. "Well, don't think of it," she ordered as she settled, "but Tyler did *not* send that man. I know that, for he's too much of a fool to lie convincingly. I'd like to know who *did* send him!"

I thought: "I would, too!"

"The idea of *you* as a suspect!" she went on, anger making her voice blaze. "*You*—a golden-haired madonna, with the eyes of a child!"

I sagged back in my chair.

"But you mustn't worry," she went on and quite as angrily, "for we'll care for you and protect you—you may be sure of that! But if I could get the man who is prying, it would go hard with him!"

I smiled, although a bit wanly, for the idea of my small, gentle aunt's doing anything cruel to any one was amusing. As she saw my amused expression, I explained it; and as I did, I looked up to see Toki's smile. And then he, in turn, explained the lift of his lips:

"Excuse gentle mirth," he said; "but very pretty—this picture—I enjoy."

AFTER luncheon I went to Percival's quarters with my aunt.

"Percy's rooms will be darkened," she said, as we traveled the upper hall. "His head is bad. It always aches frightfully after he's been sleepless. And you'll find Janette hovering almost fiercely over him. He is her one passion—poor Janette!"

I laid my hand on the letter that was against my heart. It seemed as if I would never have a chance to open it. And wondering what might be in it by way of help for me made me absent, stupid, strained.

"And after we're through with Percy, I hope you'll go lie down," my aunt urged, and to this I answered with an almost passionate "I must do that. I *need* the rest." But all I really wanted was the solitude in which to read that letter. Then we turned into a smaller hall, after Aunt Agnes had unlocked the door that led to it; and at the end of this hall I saw a heavy iron grating that was locked with a padlock.

"There are times," said my aunt as she fumbled in her pocket for a key, "when Percival must be shut away up here—times when he is quite violent. But, as you can see, he can be safely isolated." As she spoke, she swung open the door, made of iron bars, and from an inner room I heard a whimper.

"My, my!" she murmured. "He is in bad shape! We won't stay long, dear."

Percival's rooms were in keeping with the rest of the house. The windows were hung with chintzes and filmy white curtains. There were deep, low, chintz-covered chairs, book-cases that were painted white, small tables, and gay prints, and fine Oriental rugs were spread upon the shining floor. But I had the most horrible impression as I sat there. I could see little but the heavy iron bars that were across every window—bars that made Percival a prisoner when he was "violent."

As my aunt had forecast, the place was darkened, and in the gloom I settled by a big sofa on which Percival lay. After I had sat by him a moment, tense and strained, he opened his eyes, and I saw, even in that subdued light, a glint in them. And then:

"She has—come—into—my—parlor," he chanted slowly. "'Won't—you—step—into—my—parlor?' said the spider—to the—fly."

"Yes, yes, dear," said my aunt quickly, "but you must say something pleasant to your guest, Percival. It was so kind of her to come to see you."

"Kind—of *her?*" he echoed, and he laughed.

I saw my aunt stiffen. She was plainly much annoyed. "Percival," she said slowly, and as she spoke Janette came from the inner room where Percival slept, and her step was cruelly loud, I felt, for a sick room. She settled in a rocking-chair, where she rocked back and forth, despite the fact that at each swing backward a board creaked. "I'm here, Percival lamb," she said, and in an ominous, low, slow way that was not unlike his chanting manner of speech.

"Janette," he whispered, "Janette——"

"Yes, dear," she said loudly, and she got up to move toward the bed.

"Go get my knitting, Janette," Aunt Agnes ordered.

Janette hesitated.

"Did you hear me?" my aunt went on.

Slowly Janette turned toward the door. And never before had I seen so much unwillingness coupled with motion. It seemed to take all her strength to go. I could feel her heart dragging her back to Percival, and I pitied her. She went down the long, narrow corridor so slowly and soddenly that I expected to hear the squash of water from her boots.

"Jealous as a cat," said my aunt. "'Fraid I'll say something to Percival that will turn him against her. But, in her way, good. I will accord that!"

SUDDENLY, from below, came the most hideous scream I have ever heard. It seemed, in its high falsetto, to have been made by a maniac. Percival, too, screamed. My aunt stood up trembling, to say a breathless "*Come*, child!"

I tried to follow her, but Percival, laughing now, caught a fold of my dress to detain me. I pulled with all my strength, but his grip was suddenly strong. I appealed to my aunt, and she called back: "He'll let you go in a second. . . . Percival, be a good boy!"

Clinging to my dress, he swung from his sofa and, dragging me by one arm, he closed the iron grating and locked it. Then he closed the door into his room, and we were in it alone and together.

"I will—hurt you—if you—don't tell me—about Cassell," he chanted, "and I can be strong when—maddened!"

"What do you want me to tell you?" I managed to get out. One must, I realized, cajole maddened people.

"About—his—death."

"He's living," I answered.

"You—are—certain? They didn't do—*that?*"

I shook my head. "No," I answered; "they didn't do that."

"Have you—looked in the piano?" he went on.

"This morning," I answered—and now truthfully.

"Who screamed just now? Who screamed?"

"Toki," I said. I felt I *must* answer! I knew not what would be if I did not.

"Why did—he scream?"

"He was dusting the piano," I said.

Percival nodded. "Yes," he said; "yes, dusting—the piano. Do—you—dust the piano?"

"No," I answered; "I play it."

"One—ruse is—as good as—another," Percival stated. He paused a moment, during which he stared down at the rug, eyes narrowed and dark. "I'm—glad about—Cassell," he offered after this interval. "He was—too young to—go. But one must preserve—the family honor—at all—costs, must—one not?" he ended with a question.

I heard myself say: "Yes."

Percival laughed in a way that terrified me, silently, menacingly. Suddenly he leaned toward me, took my hand in his and twisted it until I almost cried out from the pain.

"You see," he stated, "I am—quite strong. And I can—be—*stronger.*" And, laughing again, he released my hand and sat back. But I was not yet free from his persecution. His eyes were dark with hate and horrible in their concentration.

"Does—Field have any—idea of *it?*" he asked.

I felt a "No" to be safe, and I said it.

"That's — good. Field is — too young—to die. Cassell too. *I*—saw—Cassell. He did not see me." Percival smiled to himself, his eyes still fixed and unmoving.

I heard Janette coming down the corridor. Back of her were heavier footsteps, and when the door opened I saw, through the sick dizziness of relief, that Doctor Field followed her.

I stood up; I felt his glance searching me for the cause of my perturbation.

"Well, Miss Burke!" he said. I clung to his hand. "And Percival is——" he added, after a kind and protecting look at me.

"I'll go to my room," I said. "Will you drop in to look at me downstairs, Doctor Field?"

He bowed as he said: "With pleasure."

Then I turned, and as I did I grew sick and dizzy, for on the shining, bare floor at my feet was—the Chinese dagger I had seen that morning. I knew not how it had come there, but I did know that it was ominously blood-stained. I shuddered and cowered. Percival was laughing—through a growing haze. I saw the motion of his shoulders. Then I saw nothing.

I OPENED my eyes. I was in my own bed, and Doctor Field was looking down at me.

"That is one of Percival's tricks," he said slowly and distinctly. "Do you understand me? One of Percival's tricks. That was another dagger, and it had on it *red ink.* Do you follow me, child?"

I nodded weakly.

"Why does Percival want to hurt me?" I asked when I could speak.

"There is a good deal that we cannot answer at this moment," Doctor Field responded, "but things will be cleared up by assembling all

of the truth that we have at hand. I need all of that, however. Quite *all* of it."

"You are hearing it from me—all I know, at least," I assured him.

"Are you certain?" he asked.

Again I nodded.

"My dear child," he said, "remember that tangled web!" As he spoke, he took from his pocket the envelope that was engraved with Blake Chester's name. "This slipped from your dress as I picked you up. I was about to lay it down when I saw who had sent it."

I said nothing. I watched him slit the envelope open. From it he took—I knew by watching his careful and slow count—twenty one-thousand-dollar bills.

"Where did you get it?" he asked.

I told him. I also told him of all that Percival had unwittingly revealed.

He listened attentively. "You've known me less than one day," he said. "Are you going to trust me to keep this?" He waved the letter, which was bulkier now, because he had folded the bills carelessly before he replaced them.

"My aunt doesn't know of the hiding-place," I said, "but Toki does." I digressed to tell him of what my aunt had told me of Toki's dusting the piano. "I am quite confident," I went on, "that it would be safer with you—if you will take it."

HE NODDED and put it in his bill-case.

"In the piano!" he repeated.

I nodded.

"Has any one seen you carrying this letter?" he questioned next.

I told him that my aunt had seen the print of it through my thin frock.

"Have you another letter around, of approximately the same size?" he asked.

I said I thought I had. I went to my desk, and there I found a bulky gray envelope marked "Steamer Letter" in the writing of a rather silly young poet who invariably let sentiment master him.

Smiling, Doctor Field said: "If it's a bit amorous, leave it where it will be found. We don't want Toki or whoever may be concerned—to remember having seen you carry an envelope when *this* one that I am taking with *me* is missed. You might even show the young poet's vaporings to your aunt. The house is full of ears! And thus whoever is concerned will suppose the lover's letter was the one warmed by your heart this morning."

I promised that I would do this, and later I did; and I was glad I did, for my aunt so enjoyed her touch with the thing she considered to be romance that for a little time she forgot the trouble that shadowed us all.

"I am going to take you to the hospital that I like the best tonight," Doctor Field went on in the undertone from which his voice had not once risen during our talk. "You'll sleep better there. I'll come back for you at six. *Six*—remember. And I'll find you much worse, you understand? And then I'll motor you over. So only until six in this house, Miss Burke!"

I thanked him, my voice trembling, for the thought of another night in that room set me to palsied shaking.

But—*Doctor Field did not come back. . . .*

*The next instalment of LONG SHADOWS will be found in the January, 1928, issue of* MYSTERY STORIES.

*A vision of a little yellow girl who lived in a dump back of the Temple of Eternal Peace.*

# A String of Beads

*By RICHARD KEITH*

***The story of a soldier's fight to retain that which was his—a struggle which continued even into the shadow realm. Whether you agree with the author or not as to the possible truth of his idea, we believe the tale will fascinate and interest you.***

TWO impulses struggled for mastery in Corporal Danny Blake's brain as the white-aproned major-surgeon bent over him in the "kickoff" ward of the army hospital. The first was a feverish desire to annihilate a grinning buck private from whose arm a tiny stream of blood was slowly trickling into a glass beaker held by a bobbed-haired, mannish-appearing nurse. The second, which gradually gained ascendancy over the first, was a wistful longing on the part of Corporal Blake to salvage from the bottom of his battered suitcase a string of beads.

Even the stinging jab of the major-surgeon's transfusion needle in Corporal Blake's right arm did not lessen the corporal's yearning to gain possession of the beads. Neither did the piercing message of pain flashed to his brain-cells blot out the pictures which were drifting before the corporal's dull blue eyes—

dancing, distorted pictures of that evening in Pekin five years before, when he had bought the string of beads from Private Bill Donahue, prize hophead of the Pekin legation guard. The floating images cavorted in the air above Corporal Blake's bed, and the corporal followed their gyrations with his burning eyes.

PRIVATE BILL DONAHUE had staggered into camp all hopped up that evening five years before. He had lurched up to Corporal Blake, who was sitting with his back against a wooden post inside the wire-enclosed legation guard camp, and, swaying to and fro, he had thrust his clinched fist into the corporal's face.

"Hol' my li'l' blue elephant, corp," he had mumbled. "Hol' him by his silver chain till I go get him some milk."

"All right, Bill," Corporal Blake had laughed, at the same time grasping the imaginary silver chain. "But make it snappy."

"Shnappy? What for? I——"

Private Donahue had broken off, muttered incoherently for a few seconds, and then, apparently forgetting his phantom blue elephant, he had jerked a small, black, oblong lacquer box from his blouse pocket. Rocking unsteadily, he had removed the cover from the box and displayed the contents before Corporal Blake's eyes.

"Lookut, corp," he had whispered furtively. "Lookut what I pinched from a Chink."

An involuntary grunt had escaped from Corporal Blake's lips as he had stared up at the string of beads which Private Donahue was dangling tantalizingly in front of him—a string of ivory beads, each exquisitely carved in the form of a girl's head and all so lifelike that they seemed to laugh and cry and pout and frown. Corporal Blake's instant reaction, which he himself had not understood at the moment, had been an eager, almost miserly longing to possess the string of beads.

"How much'll you take for 'em, Bill?" he had asked.

"Don' wanna sell 'em," Donahue had muttered.

"Five iron men," the corporal had urged.

"Hell!"

"Seven."

"Naw."

"Ten!"

"Gimme the jack quick!"

SO THE string of ivory beads had come into Corporal Danny Blake's possession. And he now recalled that evening in Pekin five years before, as the buck private's blood surged through his veins in the kickoff ward of the army hospital. The corporal shifted his gaze from the ceiling above his bed to the grinning buck private who was now pulling down his sleeve and preparing to return to duty. The private, as Corporal Blake well knew, was grinning at the thought of the extra twenty-five dollars he would receive on pay-day for his pint of blood which was now coursing through the corporal's body. Twenty-five dollars. A lot of money, Corporal Blake decided, squirming uneasily in his bed. He had paid only ten dollars for the string of beads.

The corporal moaned. That string of beads again. He couldn't seem to get those beads off his mind. He had guarded them carefully during his hitch in Pekin, and now they were lying in his suitcase in this army hospital back here in the States. But they wouldn't lie there long if he kicked off. The corporal realized the fact with a grim, gnaw-

ing despair—a despair born of his recently acquired knowledge of Property Sergeant Dorsey's ghoulish proclivities. The corporal was on to Sergeant Dorsey's little game now. If the sergeant ever got his claws on that string of beads, Amy would never see them.

Amy! Corporal Blake groaned as he drew his left arm up behind his head. He had bought the string of beads for Amy. That was it. He hadn't understood why he had hankered so strongly for the beads when Private Bill Donahue had swung them before his eyes, but the real reason had come to him later. Each daintily carved ivory head reminded Corporal Blake of his kid sister, Amy. Poor Amy! Her face was kind of yellow-white, too—just like the beads. It was thin, with blue veins showing through the skin.

Corporal Blake sighed wearily. There wasn't enough sunlight in that one living-room back of his old man's bakery shop down on Twenty-third Street in New York. Not enough chow, either. But in spite of Amy's and his old man's poverty, Corporal Blake had enlisted in the army. He had wanted a taste of what the recruiting posters called adventure. See the world! Tropical islands! Pretty girls! The corporal gritted his teeth as the surgeon tightened the bandage around his arm.

"Easy," warned the major. "Work your fingers up and down."

With automatic army obedience, Corporal Blake attempted to move his fingers, but they seemed to be no longer attached to his hand. No, they weren't, he decided. They were floating in the air above his bed—trying to seize that string of ivory beads which hung down from the ceiling. There! The thumb and forefinger were holding the string of beads before his burning eyes again. Each carved head was peeping down at him now, all alike and yet all different—as different as his kid sister's face when she laughed and cried and pouted and frowned.

Amy! Corporal Blake's head drooped and his lips moved. He muttered feverishly. When he got back to New York he'd make up for the rotten deal he had given Amy. He'd buy her nice clothes and take her places. He'd make her laugh—she was too serious for a kid. She certainly would laugh when he slipped that string of ivory beads around her neck. He'd sneak up behind her and drop the beads over her little blonde head. She'd look down at them and——

UGH! Corporal Blake grunted and licked his dry lips as a gripping pain shot through his breast. The string of beads faded—just as the corporal was certain they would fade forever if he kicked off. Amy would never see them. Property Sergeant Dorsey would be hanging the beads around some floosey's neck before the corporal's body was cold. Dorsey! The white-faced rat with his black hair stringing down over his little black eyes! He had run the string of beads through his skinny fingers the day the corporal had turned them over to him along with the rest of his property—the first day he had been admitted to the army hospital. Dorsey's black eyes had glittered.

"Sell 'em?" he had asked, stroking the beads.

"Nope," Corporal Blake had replied.

"Yuh better."

The corporal had flared up.

"Better—hell!" he had snapped.

"Oh, all right—all right," Dorsey had laughed.

*All right.* Corporal Blake now

understood the full meaning of the innuendo contained in those two words "*All right.*" A night orderly, a nice kid from North Carolina, had given the corporal the low-down on Sergeant Dorsey. When a patient died, the orderly had said, Sergeant Dorsey made an inventory of his property. He listed the articles he didn't want and forgot to list those he took a fancy to. If the relatives of the dead man signed the property receipt, Sergeant Dorsey was protected and kept the articles he had stolen. If the relatives raised a rumpus and wrote the army hospital commander, Dorsey "made another search." It was pie, as the night orderly put it, and by means of his craft the property sergeant had annexed many valuable belongings of dead patients. When Corporal Blake had learned from the night orderly the details of Sergeant Dorsey's little game of robbing the dead, the corporal had been on the point of writing his sister Amy about the string of beads, but just then the hemorrhages had started and——

"Easy," warned the major-surgeon. "Not much longer now."

CORPORAL BLAKE thrust out his jaw and half-turned in his bed. Not much longer! Why tell him? He knew it wouldn't be much longer. The surgeon couldn't kid him. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the pulmotor standing beside his half-opened door. Two orderlies were waiting to wheel it in. The chaplain had just stepped into his room and was standing at the foot of his bed—in the shadow. Not much longer! Well, no matter, the corporal decided. No more pain, anyway. No more spinal punctures. And, after all, what difference did it make whether you lived or died? You had a good time while it lasted. Lots of cheap booze in Pekin. Yellow girls who——

Corporal Blake sucked in his breath in anguish as the major-surgeon withdrew the transfusion needle from his right arm. A vision flashed across the corporal's brain as he stared up at the ceiling—a vision of a little yellow girl who lived in a dump back of the Temple of Eternal Peace, as the Chinks called it. The corporal realized now that he should have stayed away from the yellow girl, but one night in a funk of loneliness he had gone to see her—more from a desire to be with some girl, even a yellow one, than anything else. He had carried the string of beads in his pocket that night to remind him of Amy—just as some of the men in the legation guard carried rosaries to remind them of God. But Corporal Blake forgot that night—he forgot his sister Amy and he forgot God.

God!

God and his sister Amy were all mixed up in Corporal Blake's throbbing head. They always had been. Funny kid, Amy. She always talked a lot about God. She said people didn't die—they just "went to God." Amy talked to her dead mother, too, only she told Danny that their mother wasn't dead. She said Mother Blake was still alive and happy—hovering over her children most of the time. Often on lonely nights in Pekin—nights when Corporal Blake longed for a smell of the fresh yeast in his old man's bakery shop down on Twenty-third Street—he had tried to talk to his dead mother, but she had never answered. She answered Amy, though. The corporal knew that. But, then, Amy was a good kid, and he——

"Raise your arm a little," ordered the major.

Corporal Blake thought the ma-

jor's voice came from far away. Raise his arm! Sure—he'd raise his arm. There! No—didn't quite make it that time. He'd have to try again. That was funny. He couldn't raise his arm from the bed—and on top of that he seemed to be floating away. Why didn't somebody pull him down, he protested querulously. There—that was better. The chaplain had stepped out of the shadow and was holding the corporal's hand. But why didn't the chaplain let some light into the room? You could cut the blackness with a knife. And why didn't he stop those bells? They were ringing faster now—faster—faster—faster.

CORPORAL DANNY BLAKE slid out of bed, stretched his arms, and yawned. He glanced around his room. The light was streaming through the drawn shades. That was a new stunt, the corporal concluded—Houdini stuff—but the miracle was lost on him. His pain was gone now, and that fact was more important than any other. He felt as though he could float at will in space, so light was his body. He glided to the middle of the floor and glanced about. The mannish-looking nurse had disappeared. The door was just closing behind the chaplain when a pale-faced orderly pushed it open and stared into the room. Corporal Blake hailed the orderly.

"Hey, buddy," he shouted jovially, "got a cigarette?"

The orderly either did not hear, or if he did he completely ignored Corporal Blake's question. He walked toward the major-surgeon, followed by Corporal Blake's eyes. The orderly was certainly a chummy bird, commented the corporal to himself. Well, no matter. He wouldn't have to bum cigarettes any more. He could run over to the canteen and buy some. Better ask the major himself about leaving the kickoff ward first, though, he judged, and, stepping to the head of the bed beside the major, he saluted and stood at attention.

"Be all right if I run over to the canteen for some cigarettes, sir?" he asked.

At the failure of the major to return his salute, something like a wave of anguish swept over Corporal Blake. He liked the surgeon. He was a nice guy—always kidding. His face was white now, though—drawn and pale. Little lines stood out beneath his eyes. He was motioning to the orderly. Corporal Blake listened.

"Bring me some cotton and a couple of toe-tags," ordered the major.

Toe-tags! Corporal Blake gaped at the major. Toe-tags were tied to a guy's toes after he had kicked off, he knew. Good night! Corporal Blake wasn't dead. He would tell the major he wasn't. He clutched at the major's shoulder.

"I ain't dead, major!" he cried. "I'm standin' right here aside o' you, sir. Look at me—feel me!"

But the major couldn't seem to hear him or feel the grasp of his hand. He was writing something on the toe-tags which the orderly had handed him. He slipped the tags around two big toes which stuck out beneath the sheet at the foot of the bed, straightened up, shook his head, and walked out of the room. The orderly followed. Corporal Blake swiftly glided to the foot of the bed and peered down at the toe-tags. He read: "Corporal Daniel Blake, Twenty-second Infantry."

Good God! The corporal groaned as he stepped back and drew his hand across his eyes. He must be

dead! Quickly he passed to the head of the bed and stared down at a lifeless figure half-hidden by a sheet. That red hair! That face—with the scar on the right cheek bone! It was he—Corporal Danny Blake! He was dead—and yet he was gazing down at his own body. He fell back a pace. It was all so queer. But maybe Amy was right, after all. Maybe you didn't die. Maybe you just——

THE corporal leaned against the wall as two white-uniformed orderlies entered and placed a brown canvas stretcher on the floor. They covered Corporal Blake's body with a sheet, lowered it to the stretcher, and, raising it up, passed out through the side door of the kickoff ward. Corporal Blake followed. Along the asphalt walk and down the runway leading to the morgue he floated behind the orderlies bearing his dead body. At the entrance to the morgue the orderlies placed the stretcher on the cement floor. One of them opened the door while the other lighted a cigarette. They talked—nervously, it seemed to Corporal Blake as he listened.

"Got a date to-night, Pete?"

"Have I! And does she love her daddy! Come on—lift him up."

The door slammed behind the orderlies as they entered the morgue, but to Corporal Blake's amazement he drifted easily through the wooden panel and followed the cortège into a room with white-painted walls. The orderlies rested the stretcher on a porcelain table with a drain spout in the center, while one of them opened the door of a narrow compartment in a huge refrigerator. He turned to his companion, grasped the stretcher handles, and counted: "One—two—three." The orderlies slid Corporal Blake's body into the ice-box and snapped the lock. The corporal stared dumbly at the closed door. That was a good joke on somebody, he thought. His dead body was in the cooler, but he was standing outside!

The orderlies shuffled out of the morgue, and Corporal Danny Blake trailed them up the stairs to the main corridor of the army hospital. He chuckled as he heard a laboratory technician cursing a major who was standing only a few feet away. He smiled at a physiotheraphy aide who was powdering her nose in a telephone booth. He brushed against a pretty blonde nurse, entered the registrar's office, and stood in front of the warrant officer's desk. The warrant officer was picking his teeth with a pin as Corporal Blake leaned toward him.

"Corporal Daniel Blake, Twenty-second Infantry," he said to the warrant officer. "I'd like to get a string of beads I left in my bag. I——"

The corporal groaned. The warrant officer wasn't even looking at him, let alone paying any attention to his demand. He snatched a paper from an orderly and reached for his telephone. Corporal Blake fell back and listened.

"Property barracks," called the warrant officer, fingering a slip of paper. He was silent a moment. Then——

"Sergeant Dorsey?" he snapped. . . . "Check up property of Corporal Daniel Blake—Twenty-second Infantry. . . . Huh? . . . Yuh. Slip just came in."

CORPORAL DANNY BLAKE did not wait to hear more. He streaked out of the registrar's office. Sergeant Dorsey! That was the bird who was going to steal his string of beads—the beads he had carried back from Pekin to give to Amy

That was the bird who had been waiting for the corporal to die so that he might make off with them. Well, the corporal pondered, as he winged his way past the mess hall and the heliotheraphy ward, he was dead, but it seemed that death was different from his expectations. He could still see and hear, at least. Maybe he could——

Corporal Blake floated up the steps of the property barracks, eased himself through the closed door, and vaulted the railing in front of Sergeant Dorsey's desk. The white-faced property sergeant was sorting the contents of Corporal Blake's battered suitcase, which lay on his flat-topped desk. One by one he arranged the corporal's possessions in an orderly pile. He slipped an inventory sheet in his typewriter and pecked at the keys. Plunk—plunk—plunk. Corporal Blake peered over the sergeant's shoulder at the dancing letters:

1 overcoat
1 pr. shoes
3 shirts (O. D.)

Sergeant Dorsey removed his fingers from the typewriter keys, and, bending forward, picked up a small, black, oblong box which lay on his desk. His thin lips parted as he removed the cover and held up a string of ivory beads. Then he placed the beads back on his desk and tapped his typewriter again. Corporal Blake's eyes followed the words which formed themselves on the white paper:

1 hat
1 belt
2 wrap leggings

One by one Sergeant Dorsey clicked off Corporal Blake's possessions on the inventory slip, until only the string of pearls remained to be accounted for. Dorsey picked up the string of beads again, ran his sallow fingers over them, and carefully placed them at one side of his desk. He smiled as he pulled a package of cigarettes from his pocket.

Eagerly Corporal Danny Blake edged to the sergeant's desk. His right hand closed over the string of beads which Dorsey had carefully segregated—but the beads did not move. Frantically the corporal snatched at the beads with both hands, but still they remained on Dorsey's desk, each carved head staring up at the corporal—pouting, laughing, crying, frowning. Corporal Blake moaned as the horrible realization was borne in upon him that his hands were only shadows—helpless, ghostly hands as ethereal as his troubled, wandering spirit. Sergeant Dorsey would get the string of beads, after all. Amy would never see them.

DAZEDLY the corporal stared at Sergeant Dorsey as the sergeant removed a box of matches from his pocket. Despairingly Danny saw the sergeant strike a match to light his cigarette.

Automatically Corporal Blake glided over to Sergeant Dorsey's side. He did not understand why. One and only one thought consumed his incorporeal being. He must make Sergeant Dorsey enter that string of beads on the inventory slip! But how? Like a flash from out of the ether a thought came to Corporal Blake. Maybe if he could put out that match in Sergeant Dorsey's hands, something might happen. Something might happen! Desperately the corporal fluttered to and fro like a wounded bird. The match in Sergeant Dorsey's hands flickered and died.

Corporal Blake now hovered

closer to Sergeant Dorsey's side. If he could only put the fear of God into the property sergeant's black heart! Any man who would rob the dead must be a coward, the corporal judged—and a coward was a prey to fear. He might even believe in ghosts! Corporal Blake chuckled. So he was a ghost now. He had often read about ghosts, but he had never expected to be one. He heard the sergeant curse as he struck a second match. Corporal Blake beat the air about him like a terrified wraith. The match in the sergeant's fingers sputtered and went out.

WITH an oath Sergeant Dorsey glanced up at his window. It was closed. He struck a third match and as the flame leaped up he thrust his cigarette into his cupped hands. But Corporal Blake's movements were swifter than the motions of any mere mortal. The corporal swayed madly—to and fro—up and down. He gyrated like a lost soul beating its wings against the gates of hell. Sergeant Dorsey leaned back in his chair. A dead match fell from his fingers and an unlighted cigarette rolled to the floor beside it.

Corporal Danny Blake smiled as he peered into Sergeant Dorsey's white, pasty face. The sergeant's hands were shaking. Sweat stood out between the wisps of black hair which strung down on his forehead. His thin lips twitched as his fingers pecked at the typewriter keys. Plunk — plunk — plunk. The shade of Corporal Danny Blake laughed triumphantly. Amy was right. A guy didn't die. He could still see and hear everything. Yes, he could even make a hard-boiled sergeant cough up a string of beads. Amy would get the beads now, because the last line of Sergeant Dorsey's inventory slip stood out in clear, black type:

1 string of beads

# The Reappearance of the Centaurs

NOT so many years ago there was much talk among a certain smart set in London about an experience that had come to a foreign grand-duchess and her husband while they were traveling in the wilds of Greece. One night they wandered out together on a bare mountain side. They were sitting on a rock in the forest, enjoying the beautiful, moonlight-flooded scene, when they suddenly heard the galloping of the hoofs of many horses. They were astonished, as they were far from civilization and nowhere near a road. The galloping hoofs sounded like a charge of cavalry. They stood up, so as not to be run over by the raiders, whoever they might be, and were astounded to see sweep past a great company of strange creatures, half man, half horse. They were so fleet-footed and so full of the joy of life that the two watchers longed to be one of their company.

When they returned to camp, they found their Greek camp servants full of terror. All they could get from them was that the horses had been greatly scared, and that they themselves had heard something known of and much feared.

*He raved and menaced with his gun.*

# The Mystery Bandit

By RUSSELL ARDEN BANKSON

***This is a story laid in that portion of our country which still breathes the spirit of the wild, tempestuous, glorious "old West." A rocky gorge, a mysterious bandit—and then an unexpected development. And it was on the success of this encounter that the immediate happiness of Bud and his pretty Edie depended.***

"ALLOW," said Sheriff Nate Baldwin, speaking slowly to his young deputy, Bud Tolliver, "we got t' git in an' do somethin' about them robberies."

He had just hung up the phone on Herb Southard, superintendent of the Mad Lady mine, over on Cougar Creek.

Herb had been wildly excited, and he had been telling his old friend, the sheriff, just what he thought of him as a peace officer, using the purest of unadulterated American language as he had learned it through a lifetime of association with miners and muckers.

"That's the second time in a month that our pack-trains carrying gold bullion over the trail have been held up and robbed," he had just been storming over the wire. "Looks like you laid down flat that first time, and if there isn't something doing now, I'm going to see that we have a new sheriff in this county."

Nate had let a half-grin spread across his grizzled, weather-beaten

face as he listened, and once he had looked across to Bud and winked. But when he hung up he was serious enough.

"It sure beats the band, Bud," he opined. "An' I ain't blamin' Herb none, even if his bark is worse'n his bite. It means his job if these here stick-ups keep on. They got twenty-five thousand in gold bars each time. Yes, sir, allow we got t' figger out somethin'."

HE WALKED over to the window of the shambling frame structure that was the court-house building where the sheriff's office was located. Tugging on his long mustache, he gazed down the main street of the little mountainous county-seat town to the depot, where a pack-train of black mules from one of the mines of the more inaccessible districts back in the wilderness was being unloaded of sacks of rich, hand-picked gold ore, ready for shipment.

Bud waited, for he knew the sheriff was figuring out the manner in which they would go after the gold robbers.

Nate had called him up that morning, after the first report of the robbery had come in, and asked him if he would like to be a deputy sheriff. Out of school for a month and anxious to start making his mark in the world, Bud had seized the offer in spite of vigorous protests from certain quarters.

But now, sitting there a full-fledged deputy, waiting for orders, he showed his nervousness.

Nate spent fully ten minutes at the window, while Bud wiped and oiled his gun to cover up his excitement, glancing now and then at the lean, stooped shoulders of his chief.

Then the sheriff turned and went back to his desk. Several hours had already elapsed since the first report of the robbery. But he seemed in no hurry. Picking up the telephone, he asked the operator to connect him with Superintendent Southard at the Mad Lady mine.

"This is Nate talkin' ag'in, Herb," he said, when he heard the mine manager's voice on the wire. "Yuh got a vacancy in the office fer a bright young college feller? He's been studyin' 'bout mines, an' ought t' be kinda smart."

Bud, listening, started forward. He knew that the sheriff referred to him.

At the other end of the wire the mine superintendent, after his first gasp, caught something in the voice of the officer that caused him to play up to the lead.

"Yes, I could use the right man," he answered. "I've been keeping my eyes open for some one. And if you're willing to recommend him, I'll give him a trial. Send him along."

"Thanks, Herb," the sheriff concluded the conversation.

THEN he turned to Bud, that quizzical grin of his, half concealed behind his mustache, almost coming out into an open smile.

"That was yuh I was talkin' about," he said. "Herb's right smart about gittin' ont' things. Come back jest like we'd talked it all over ahead o' time."

Then he grew serious again, studying his new deputy across the dilapidated old desk.

"Bud, it's yer big chance," he went on after a pause. "I got a lot o' faith in yuh, on account o' yer paw, an' I ain't afraid but what yuh can put it over, but yuh got t' take some risk.

"Way I got this thing figgered out, they's a tip-off inside o' that office. They's some one in there that knows when the bullion is comin' out, an'

he's gittin' word t' his bandit friend, who's makin' the hauls.

"Now, they ain't but a few men knows when the gold's comin' out. 'Way Herb works it, he has half a dozen long pack-trains workin' all the time, carryin' in supplies fer the camp an' things that's needed fer the mine an' mill plant. They's a guard ridin' with each pack-train all the time, an' the packer is armed.

"The guards an' packer don't know when they're bringin' gold out. An' they ain't nothin' suspicious about 'em, fer both times they been shot up in a way they wouldn't have been if they was on the inside o' the holdup. An' both times they told the same story about this here lone mystery bandit that gits the drop on 'em from some point o' vantage, an' forces 'em t' unload the mules an' then busts their wrists so's they can't do no gun-play.

"Herb's been sendin' gold out o' the Mad Lady fer two year an' never lost a bar, till this here mystery bandit shows up on the trail, an' now he loses fifty thousand inside o' a month.

"First time I aimed they was somebody workin' inside, but Herb sets a heap by the men he picks, an' he wouldn't listen t' no talk like that. They wasn't nothin' left fer me t' do but go trapesin' over the hills in a sort o' wild-goose chase that I knowed wouldn't git me nowhere.

"This time, though, he's talkin' sense. He says fer me t' go ahead an' work it out my own way. An' that means fer yuh t' go in t' the Mad Lady an' take a job in the office. Then yuh got t' keep a eye peeled fer this here feller that's doin' the tip-off. But that ain't all. We want him worst, o' course, but we got t' git that bandit, too. An' I can handle that end o' it if yuh give me a tip-off whenever they's a load o' bullion comin' out, in such a way no one else could know what yuh was doin'.

"Yuh an' Edith Murphy is gettin' sorta thick, 'way things look t' me. S'posin' yuh was t' call her up an' talk some o' this here gooey love mush t' her. Can't be too keerful about cut-ins on the wire. That may be the way this here bandit's gittin' his information.

"Yuh jest call Edie up an' talk t' her whenever yuh feel like it. But whenever yuh tell her yuh're comin' out t' see her an' name the day, I'll allow that's the day they's a shipment o' bullion comin'."

THE arrangement was simple, and Bud grinned appreciatively. This old friend of his father in the early gold placer and vigilante days of Idaho commanded admiration for the brains that operated behind that grizzled face with its flowing mustache and twinkling blue eyes.

"Slick, Uncle Nate," he said with enthusiasm. "A peach of an idea."

It always pleased the old peace officer to have the boy call him "Uncle." His eyes twinkled, and he laid a gnarled hand on the shoulder of the younger man.

"Wisht yuh'd keep a sort o' record o' all telephone calls that go out o' the office," he said. "They's only one telephone at the Mad Lady, an' that's the one in Herb Southard's office.

"I'm goin' t' give yuh a letter t' Herb. It'll explain some things, so's he'll give yuh a little leeway, only don't let no one else squint at it."

"What shall I do if I spot the man I think is giving the tip-off to the bandit?" he asked.

"Well, we'll work a little slicker on him," Nate said. "When yuh git word I got my bad man, yuh jest natur'ly slip the bracelets on

him an' we'll see what happens. Only, yuh be durned keerful, Bud. That's where I got t' put a lot o' faith in yuh. Reckon yuh're right, then go ahead."

Thus it came about that Bud Tolliver became second assistant to Superintendent Herb Southard of the Mad Lady mine, and much in the confidence of that worthy, who had implicit faith in the sheriff.

THE Mad Lady gold mine stands isolated in a deep canyon far back in the wilderness of the Bitter Root mountains, with forty miles of twisting mountainous trail between it and the county-seat town, the nearest point of civilization and contact with the railroad.

To supply the mine it was necessary that long pack trains be operated steadily over the trail, each one covering the route in two days, spending a night at a half-way station established by the company.

Life at the Mad Lady mine settled down to routine after the second robbery. The directors were infuriated at the loss of their gold, and they called a special meeting in the city to discuss the matter of discharging the superintendent forthwith for his lack of caution. But unknown to Herb Southard, Sheriff Nate Baldwin, being a close friend of one of the directors, was informed of the meeting, and at the proper moment walked in on the board.

The board members listened to him and voted their confidence in the superintendent. Nate Baldwin had a way about him that impelled people to listen to his slow drawl and believe implicitly in him.

So Herb's job was saved for him before he knew that it was all but gone, and affairs at the Mad Lady went ahead as though nothing out of the ordinary had ever happened.

Bud Tolliver was unknown to the men at the mine. He had been away at school for several years, and when he came back and accepted Nate Baldwin's invitation to become his deputy there were but two persons who knew of this connection — Superintendent Southard and Edie Murphy.

To all intents and purposes, Bud became assistant to the chief clerk, who was the superintendent's right-hand man. And it was on this chief clerk that Bud at once fastened his suspicions, for he disliked the looks of Edward Hungate from the moment he shook hands with him. It was a listless, limp shake, and it made Bud think of a snake. Hungate, though, had been with the company for a number of years, having been sent out from the company offices in the city because of his office management qualifications. He looked after all routine details and attended to all the ordering of supplies.

But in spite of Hungate's suave self-assurance, Bud took a deep inward dislike to him, and watched him covertly from the first.

Hungate knew that there was plenty of work for another clerk in the office, having even suggested a friend of his for the place. Therefore, there was nothing to arouse his suspicions in Southard's announcement that he had engaged a young man just out of school, on the recommendation of an old friend.

But he was prejudiced against Bud, because he had hoped to put his own man in, and he proceeded to make life as miserable for him as he could.

Bud sweated and toiled, but he mastered the details readily, and before two weeks had passed was able to go ahead without instruction. He liked the work, and half wished that it might continue, for he was aware

of the limitations of a deputy sheriff's position in a small mountain county, and had accepted it only with the understanding that he was to leave it for the first desirable mining job which came to him, along the lines for which he had trained himself. But in going to the Mad Lady he did not forget that he was there as an officer of the law.

HE TOOK full advantage of the sheriff's suggestion that he converse often with Edith Murphy. Edie was not at all hard to talk to, and Bud had told her some time before, within a week after his return from school, that he would like to talk to her the rest of his life, across the breakfast table, the luncheon table, and the dinner table. But Edie, who taught the fourth grade in the public school, had ambitions, and she was outspoken against his slump to a hundred-dollar-a-month deputy-sheriff's job.

She liked Bud, and she admitted it, but it was only after a long and confidential talk with the sheriff that she had agreed to Bud's accepting the work.

So it was with no little degree of joy that Bud hurried to her after his first assignment from the sheriff, and informed her that he was "going to work in the office of the Mad Lady mine."

"That's fine, Bud — much better than being a deputy sheriff," she said, her eyes growing soft as she snuggled a little closer to him. And after that he hadn't the heart to tell her the truth. He went away letting her think that he had given up his peace officer work.

And from the mine he called her every evening, after the day's work was over.

Then a strang thing, which Edie did not at all connect with Bud's line of duty, took place. Sheriff Nate Baldwin, an old friend of the Murphy family, began to drop by on his way home each evening, to hear the latest from Bud, and to talk to Edie about him and what a fine fellow he was, and to inquire religiously as to when the young scamp was going to come into town.

"I sure would like t' know the minute he's comin'," Nate told Edie. "I got somethin' important t' take up with him. I'd be much obliged if yuh'd sorta let me know right away when he says he's comin' in."

Edith liked this interest in her young man, and she asked him why he didn't call Bud up and talk to him.

"Well, yuh see, he's sorta—sorta sensitive about somethin' that's come up betwixt us," Nate explained. "I'd like it a heap well if yuh wouldn't even mention my name t' him, only yuh jest tell me when he's comin'."

There was a touch of deep feeling in Nate's tones, and Edie Murphy thrilled at the part she was playing in bringing Bud and the old sheriff together again. She kept her word and did not mention the officer in her daily conversations with Bud.

But always she was asking Bud when he was coming out, and finally she became a little piqued at his steadfast answer that he was so swamped with his new work that he couldn't leave it yet.

"I'll be caught up one of these days, though, Edie, and you can bet I'll fly out over the trail as fast as I can get there."

And the girl had to be satisfied with that.

But a month passed, and Bud had not "caught up with his new work" yet.

THEN there came a day when Superintendent Herb Southard showed plainly that he was nervous.

He sat in the mine office and fidgeted with the papers on his desk, and stared out of the window along the canyon to where the mine buildings stood plastered against the precipitous mountain-side, like a swallow's nest on a barn rafter, and to where the muck made a big gray pile on the canyon floor.

From his desk, where he was filing the daily production reports, Bud Tolliver watched him. He knew that the climax was coming, that the superintendent was planning another shipment of bullion.

Finally Southard stood up and addressed Edward Hungate.

"We'll send a double shipment of bullion out with the pack-train tomorrow," he announced curtly. "Fix the shipping papers, will you, Ed?"

Hungate had been watching his superior, too, over his ledger, but as Southard addressed him he merely looked up.

"All right, Mr. Southard," he said, keeping his pencil point on the list of figures he had been pretending to add. "Want to give me the instructions now?"

Southard hesitated a moment.

"We've been getting top-heavy here," he said, after a pause. "Frankly, I've been afraid to ship, after the two experiences we had. But we've got to get it out now. We'll sink or swim. I'm going to send out a double allotment—twenty of those five-thousand-dollar bars. That will bring us down to where we ought to be. We shouldn't keep too much here at the mine. It's against orders and is a big temptation to crooks."

"I'll get things moving," the chief clerk answered in a matter-of-fact voice.

Superintendent Southard hesitated again.

"And, by the way, Ed," he said, then turned his head toward Bud Tolliver, to include him, "we'll say nothing about this shipment. We three will be the only ones to know about it. We'll load it ourselves tonight, and see if we can stop the infernal leak that has caused us so much trouble."

"Good idea," Hungate agreed. "I've thought we should have done that right along. There was no reason why half a dozen different men should be knowing when we were shipping. Too big a chance that one of them might be crooked."

"Well, I couldn't believe there would be that big a cur in this camp," Southard came back, looking Hungate straight in the eyes. "The second time hand-running, though, brought me around to Sheriff Nate Baldwin's way of thinking. I believe there is a traitor among us. So we'll eliminate the chance of his operating this time by keeping the information among ourselves."

Hungate looked insinuatingly at Bud; but Southard, catching the meaning of his clerk's nod, shook his head.

Bud saw the exchange, and the hot blood rushed to his face in spite of himself. He suddenly felt a burning hatred for Edward Hungate, a hatred which he could scarcely repress. He said nothing, however.

AS the working day drew to a close, Hungate went over to the small table where the telephone rested and spread out an assortment of papers, with lists of supplies and materials to be ordered.

"I'll be using the 'phone for quite a while, getting these instructions in," he said coldly, glaring at Bud. He was well aware of Bud's daily habit of calling Edith Murphy before he left the office.

"That's all right, Mr. Hungate," he came back cheerfully. "I've got some work piled up here ahead of

me. I can keep busy for a spell."

Hungate bit his thin lips with his white teeth and scowled darkly at the new assistant clerk; but he said nothing, for Superintendent Southard was still sitting at his desk, staring blankly at the papers before him.

Hungate began to put in his calls. He got in touch with first this merchant and then that one, giving them lists of equipment or camp supplies to be put up for the packers, or to be ordered from the city. He went carefully through each one of the prepared sheets before him.

Then, in the middle of a conversation, he began angrily to click the receiver.

"Hello! Hello!" he stormed. "Oh, damnation! Who is it that is always cutting us off? Hello!"

He turned impatiently from the 'phone, toward the superintendent.

"This line's busted somewhere, Mr. Southard," he said. "I don't know what the devil we'll do with that Blyston order for cup-grease. We're getting so low that it will mean a shut-down if it doesn't get started in. That's the second time that wire's gone down in the last week."

The superintendent aroused himself and looked at Hungate.

Better shoot a trouble man out along the line right away," he said. "He may be able to pick it up before dark. Probably a tree snapped the wire. There's been some heavy wind blowing to-day."

Hungate turned to Bud.

"Go down and get Jefferson at the power house," he instructed. "Tell him to get up here right away."

Bud hurried out, stuffing a tablet into his pocket. He had been writing steadily while Hungate talked over the telephone. He had taken down every detail of Hungate's conversations.

As he left the office, he felt that Hungate was glaring at his back, but he did not turn around.

He found Jefferson at the power-house and sent him up to the office. But he did not himself return.

INSTEAD, he went up to his own tiny cabin, perched in a niche cut in the side of the steep mountain, beyond the large one occupied by the superintendent, and waited until he saw Herb Southard come trudging up the trail. Southard was plainly worried and nervous, and he started when Bud faced him before his door.

"I had to speak to you alone," Bud explained quickly. "It was darned funny the way that 'phone went dead just when it did. I didn't know whether you noticed or not, but Hungate called phone number Three Six, and ordered *twenty* picks to be sent up with *to-morrow morning's* pack-train."

Superintendent Southard was looking at him queerly.

"Well, what's the answer, Bud?" he asked patiently. "I'll bite. It sounds like a good one." He laughed dryly.

"It is!" Bud assured him with suppressed excitement. "I've copied it all down on this tablet, and I know I've got it straight. Phone number Three Six is Bennett's Pool Hall, in town. Isn't that a devil of a funny place to be ordering *twenty* picks to be sent up to-morrow morning? Don't you see, *twenty* gold bars are going out on *to-morrow morning's* pack-train?"

Superintendent Southard's eyes opened wide, as though he had been struck on the point of the chin and were counting the stars. Then his brows contracted in a deep frown and his eyes went hard.

"I'll break every bone in his body!" he snapped savagely. "The dirty cur! So it's him, eh?"

Bud shook his head.

"Wait," he said. "To let on now would spoil everything. You haven't anything more than my word yet. But I went through the records in the office and I found that on the day previous to each of the other robberies, *ten* picks were ordered each time, for delivery the following day. And there were *ten* bars of bullion in each of those shipments."

Southard swore savagely, but Bud went right on.

"I've got to get to a telephone right away," he said. "You wanted me to help get the shipment ready to-night. Can't you send me out on some other errand? I can ride like the devil down to Happy Day mine and use their phone."

Southard swore savagely, but Bud

"All right," he snapped. "I'll tell Hungate I rushed you down to the Happy Day to borrow some cup-grease, to play safe if we didn't get an order through in time for to-morrow."

BUD hurriedly left camp, riding along a dim trail that led down the canyon to the Happy Day mine. It was five miles of rather rough going, but he urged his horse forward with all speed, to enable him to cover the distance before dark.

The Happy Day was a smaller mine, and he had no trouble in spotting the superintendent's cabin at once. He made his request for the cup-grease, which was readily supplied. Then, seemingly on the verge of leaving, he appeared to remember something, and asked if he might use the telephone, since the Mad Lady phone was dead.

The superintendent went over and unlocked the mine office for him.

"Southard has been running in a lot of tough luck with trail bandits lately, hasn't he?" the superintendent asked.

"Sure has," Bud answered, working the crank on the rural telephone. He had some trouble in getting his number, but finally the call went through and he heard Edie's voice.

"Hello, there!" he greeted cheerfully. "Think I wasn't going to call you to-night? Well, I had to make a hurry-up trip down the canyon to another mine for some grease. I'm talking from their phone now. You might report to central that the Mad Lady line is dead. Say, sweetheart, I've got some good news for you. The boss says I can start out with to-morrow morning's pack-train. And I can stay in town the rest of the week. Does that sound good? To-morrow morning. Did you get it?"

She did, and she told him just how good the news was.

As Bud hung up, she remembered how anxious Sheriff Nate Baldwin was to know when Bud was coming out. She called the officer up at once and notified him gleefully.

"And I hope you two make up," she scolded him. "I want you to be friends."

"Reckon we'll do that," the sheriff told her, chuckling.

But when he had finished talking to the girl he sat in the darkness of the porch of his home and studied. So there was a shipment of gold bullion starting out from the Mad Lady the next day!

He sat for an hour. The town quieted down. A prospector leading a pack horse well loaded with supplies, came along the main street at a brisk walk, heading out into the hills. Sheriff Baldwin called a greeting to him as he went by, and the rider answered him out of the darkness. Nate failed to recognize the voice, but prospectors and timber

cruisers were coming and going all the time. There was nothing unusual in his movements. Many of them preferred to travel the well beaten trails in the coolness of night, and rest during the heat of the mid-summer days.

SHERIFF BALDWIN waited another half-hour. No one was astir.

Quietly he slipped into the house and strapped on his gun. Then he loaded a saddle-bag with provisions and went out to the barn, where he saddled his riding horse. Then, slipping out the back way, he left town without being seen, heading into the hills by an infrequently used trail which rose abruptly toward the divide.

When daylight came filtering in over the rim of the divide, Sheriff Baldwin was fifteen miles from the county-seat town and two miles off the main trail. He moved on steadily until mid-afternoon. Then he veered sharply to the right and headed for the main trail.

IN THE meantime Herb Southard, with the assistance of his chief clerk, Edward Hungate, had loaded twenty heavy metal bars, ready for the packers who would leave the following morning. He had gone about it rather grimly. Then he had sat on his own doorstep, to await the return of Bud Tolliver from the mine below.

But Bud had not come into camp at midnight, so he went to bed.

With the coming of morning, he went first to Bud's cabin. But the young man had not been there during the night, although, looking down to the stables, Southard saw the horse Bud had ridden standing at the corral gate, with its saddle still on.

Southard was alarmed at this, and hurried to make inquiries. No one had seen Bud.

"Probably connected up with some moonshine down there and is sleeping it off," Hungate surmised, with an ill-concealed sneer.

"More likely he fell from the horse, coming over that rough trail in the dark, and hurt himself," Southard barked back.

He sent two men at once to search for Bud, and then he and Hungate went over to the office, where they could watch the loading of the pack string for the early start.

THE mules got under way. Supposedly no one but the two men who watched from the office window knew of the load they carried. The departure of the packers was a regular routine, and the miners going on the early morning shift paid no attention whatever.

The string was scarcely out of sight before the two men whom the superintendent had sent to search for Bud came back into camp, supporting between them a human body scarcely able to stand on its own legs. They came directly to the office, and the two watchers saw that it was Bud Tolliver.

His face and head were cut and matted with blood and dirt, which so covered his distorted, swollen features that he could scarcely see. His clothing was torn. He sank to the floor as the men released him.

And from him rose the rank, heavy stench of moonshine whisky.

Hungate sneered openly.

"So drunk that he doesn't know what it's all about," the chief clerk exalted.

Superintendent Southard's face was set in grim lines. He had come really to like Bud, feeling that there was something worth while in him.

"My God, Bud, what did you do it

for?" he demanded, his voice going harsh.

Bud got to a sitting position then and looked up at his superior, forcing his swollen eyes open.

"Smell my breath," he mumbled weakly.

Southard stared at him coldly, but there was something in the young man's tone which impelled him to obey. He stooped and sniffed. Then he stood up again. There was no trace of the whisky odor on Bud's breath.

Bud looked at Hungate, and his bruised face twisted into a grimace, but he spoke to the superintendent.

"Riding along—trail," he managed, trying desperately to make connected phrases come, while he rocked dizzily. "Man—jumped up. Struck—head—face."

Then he fell over and lay still on the floor. Hungate stood there with his face white, his teeth biting into his thin lips.

Herb Southard's eyes narrowed to slits as he stared at Bud and then at his chief clerk. Without a word, he helped carry Bud into the mine hospital room adjoining the office, to have his wounds dressed.

Then he went back to the office and sat at his desk, looking out of the window. Edward Hungate was there, going about his work, but the superintendent paid no attention to him, for his mind was on Bud.

DURING the middle of the forenoon the telephone rang—the first sign of life it had given during the day. Hungate sprang nervously toward it, but Southard got there before him. He had the receiver to his ear and was shouting into the mouthpiece.

"Yes, this is the Mad Lady," he called. "Yes. Found the break in town, eh? I sent a man out from this end to look for it. All right. Thanks."

He banged up the receiver.

"Funny business!" he snapped at Hungate. "The wire was cut in town. Who d'you suppose wanted to do that?"

Southard went back to his seat at his desk.

His thoughts now were following the pack-train, picturing its advance along the trail. At noon it would be at the start of Deadman's Gorge. Somewhere within the five miles of that rocky gorge the attack would be made, if the mystery bandit were operating. The packer and the guard would stop and rest the string for half an hour and eat lunch before entering the gorge. Between twelve-thirty and three o'clock was when the trouble would come—if it came.

AT FIFTEEN minutes before two the door connecting the office with the hospital room opened.

Bud Tolliver stood there, wavering a bit on unsteady feet, but there was a gun in his hand, and it was leveled at Edward Hungate.

"Hold 'em up!" he said steadily, as the chief clerk leaped up with a snarl like a cornered animal.

Bud's hand with the gun did not tremble. Hungate slumped back in the chair, his face pasty.

"Wanted that tablet with my notes on it pretty bad, didn't you?" Bud asked slowly. "When you searched me for it last night I got a good look at your face. And when you poured that bottle of rot-gut whisky over me, I saw what your game was. It's ended now, though, and by this time the sheriff probably has your bandit partner, too. Uncle Nate told me to make sure of my man, and then go ahead. I've gone ahead. Now we'll sit here and wait until the next order comes."

OUT on the trail the guard and the packer brought their string up to the mouth of Deadman's Gorge about noon and stopped for a rest and for lunch. Then they shoved steadily ahead.

The string of mules came around a sharp bend. The packer was in the lead, the guard in the rear.

Then, as though he had come out of the very air itself, the mystery bandit stood before them, two guns leveled. He sat astride his horse, looking at them with flinty eyes above a red bandana handkerchief that covered the lower part of his face. It was exactly fifteen minutes to two o'clock.

He said nothing, but there was a menace in his guns which neither packer nor guard dared disregard. Four of their comrades had already had their wrists shattered when they failed to raise their arms fast enough. The string of mules came to a grunting, half frightened halt.

A deadly silence settled down over the gulch, while the mystery bandit sat there astride his mount, motionless, waiting.

The packer raised his hands high into the air. The guard made a twitching movement, saw the hammer flutter on the six-shooter in the left hand of the bandit, and dropped his gun to the ground with a clatter.

Then the robber spoke.

"Git down!" he ordered sharply.

Both men crawled from their saddles.

"Dump them saddle-bags," he next commanded.

The two men obeyed, while the glinting eyes of the mystery bandit overlooked no single move they made.

When they had finished, twenty heavy, oblong bars rested on the ground, each carefully sewn in canvas.

"Load that stuff int' the bags on my horse," came the next curt order.

The two obeyed. There was no chance for a false move.

When they had finished, the bandit backed his horse out of the trail.

"Leave your guns behind," he snapped. "Git int' yer saddles an' move on, like nothin' had happened. Don't look around. Keep goin'!"

They obeyed, and the pack-train got under way, following the treacherous course of the gorge.

The two men did not venture to look back. Both of them felt that cold, steely eyes were watching them. They moved forward for a mile.

THEN, as though he had sprung from the floor of the gorge, the mystery bandit stood in front of them again. And he menaced them with two guns as he had done before—only, instead of a red bandana, he wore a blue one across the lower part of his face; and instead of a roan horse, he sat astride a gray one.

He ordered them from their saddles; he curtly commanded them to empty their saddle-bags.

The packer ventured to open his mouth.

"Yuh got it all the first time, back there," he said. "We ain't got no more."

The mystery bandit cursed them; he raved and menaced with his guns. But in the end he was convinced. He lined the packer and the guard up against the gorge wall and himself investigated the saddle-bags.

Then suddenly, with a harsh oath, he swooped along the gorge, going in the direction from which the pack-train had come, riding like mad, leaving the two with their string of mules standing there to stare after him, until they felt it was safe to go on to the halfway station, where they could telephone back to the superintendent.

The blue-kerchiefed bandit rode madly to a point where he saw the evidence of the first holdup. There he paused long enough to determine which direction the red-kerchiefed bandit had gone. He was hot on his trail.

The red bandit had taken a dangerously perpendicular trail up out of the gorge to the wilderness above. The blue bandit knew this trail, too. He sent his horse up it with relentless speed.

On top, he rode swiftly. The trail of the red bandit was clear. He was heading straight into the fastness of the Clearwater wilderness. And he was traveling with all speed. The blue bandit threw away caution. He jerked the bandana from his face and dug in his spurs.

Ahead of him, in a little open glade on the mountainside, he saw the red bandit's horse standing, and he rushed forward with both guns drawn.

"Up with 'em, yuh double-crossin' skunk!" he commanded. "Yer goin' t' die fer that!"

The red bandit's horse looked up and whinnied. There was no human form beside it.

THE blue bandit was out in the glade by then. And too late he realized his mistake—that he had rushed into a trap.

"Throw 'em up!" an easy, slow voice drawled behind him. "They's jest the same as two holes through yuh right now."

The blue bandit wheeled and fired, but there were two quick shots and both his guns spun from his hands, their bullets going harmlessly into the air. He sat there dazed, looking into the half-humorous face of Sheriff Nate Baldwin.

The sheriff came forward. In his left hand were dangling slim steel bracelets.

"Knowed yuh'd figger Edward Hungate had double-crossed yuh," he said. "Reckoned yuh wouldn't let him git away with it, an' would come hell-bent-fer-'lection arter him."

"H u n g a t e !" the blue bandit snarled. "The dirty cur! He put yuh onto this. I was a fool t' stack up with a white-collared yellow-back."

"Well, it ain't hardly fair t' that scullion t' give him brains fer sech a double-cross," the sheriff drawled, snapping the handcuffs down. "Yuh see, they's kind o' a double consideration int' this here business.

"Bud Tolliver's a mighty nice young feller, an' I got a right smart likin' fer that girl, Edie, o' his'n. She aims he should amount t' somethin', an' I sorta had a eye on that chief clerk's job, over at the Mad Lady, it payin' enough fer a young married couple t' live on. I reckoned as how Bud could git the head start fer it if he was t' be on the ground when Ed was through.

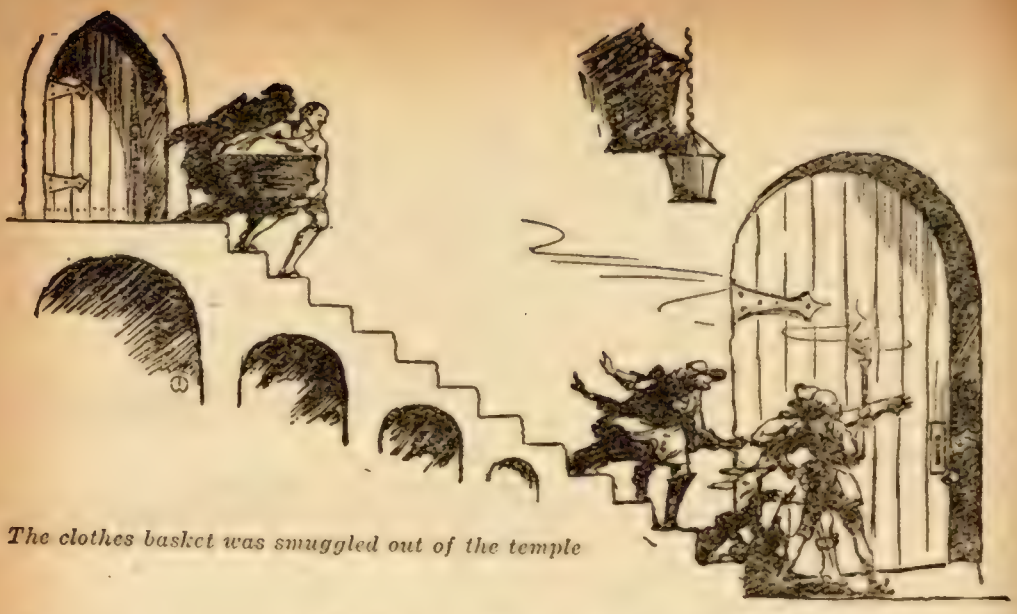
"Now we'll git over t' the halfway station, an' I'll 'phone in t' Bud that he can resign as deputy sheriff an' apply fer that minin' job, after he gits through pokin' his gun up agin Ed's ribs an' gits the bracelets on him, thanks t' yer kind information.

"Then I s'pose we'd best go back t' the mine an' give Herb Southard back his lead bars, so's he can use 'em fer dummies some other time, if they's anybody got a foolish idea it's safe t' stick up the Mad Lady bullion packers."

The sheriff twisted his long mustache quizzically at his captive.

"Was yuh ever in love?" he asked irrelevantly. "It's turrible, I guess, from th' way Edie took on when she knowed Bud was comin' fer a visit. Yuh'd think they wasn't no other man in the world.

"Allow I'd best 'phone out t' her Bud 'll be a day late keepin' his date."



*The clothes basket was smuggled out of the temple*

# Famous Unsolved Mysteries

A SERIES

By ALVIN F. HARLOW

## 2. The Lost Dauphin

***A small, fair-haired boy was cast into prison—and the fate of a nation hung on his release. And then something happened—a something on which history is silent, but around which many theories have been woven. Alvin F. Harlow presents the most tenable of these, though neither he nor any one else can hope ever to peer back through the years and determine the true fate of the little Bourbon prince.***

ONE of the most profound mysteries in all history is that of the fate of the Dauphin, the little crown prince of France at the time of the French Revolution, who, because of the death of the King, his father, was rightfully King Louis XVII when he died, was murdered, or escaped from his prison in Paris, in 1794-1795. For decades past most historians have been in the habit of declaring dogmatically that the Dauphin died in prison on June 8, 1795. You may see it stated thus in books of reference, such as the Century Dictionary. The story of the Dauphin has such a romantic flavor that dry-as-dust historians, who dislike anything of the sort,

have for years declared some of the most authentic parts of it to be fiction. The truth of the matter is that the Dauphin did not die in prison. What became of him? Ah, that's quite another matter!

IN 1789 the first disorders of the French Revolution began in Paris. The discontented populace and their leaders did not at first have any idea of upsetting the throne, but certain firebrands among them continually stirred them to greater madness and violence. The King, Louis XVI, and his family, convinced that they were in bodily danger, attempted to escape from Paris in 1791, but were stopped and brought back.

For another year they lived in the Palace of the Tuileries in growing terror as the people became more menacing. At last, on August 10, 1792, the mob invaded and sacked the Tuileries, and the King; his Queen, Marie Antoinette; his sister, the Princess Elizabeth; and his little son and daughter, were carried before the Revolutionary Assembly, whence they were taken to an old castle popularly known as The Temple (it had been built centuries before to be the home of the Grand Prior of the Knights Templars), which the Commune had decreed was to be their prison. Here the royal family were kept, though permitted to live in one another's company, for five months. But the extreme terrorists had determined that the King must die, and after a mock trial he was sent to the guillotine on January 21, 1793.

Six months after his death the Dauphin was taken away from the rest of the family and imprisoned in another part of the Temple; and a short time later his mother, Queen Marie Antoinette, and his aunt, Princess Elizabeth, were also led to execution, without even an opportunity to say farewell to him.

There were now left only two members of the family: the little Prince and his sister, Marie Thérèse, who was seven years older than he. When they were imprisoned, the Dauphin was seven years and four months old, and his sister was fourteen. Little Charles Louis is said to have been a fair-haired, good-looking boy, gentle and loyal in spirit, very quick-witted and advanced much beyond his years in his studies.

WHEN the Prince, on July 3, 1793, was taken from his family and imprisoned in a separate room, he was put into the care of an ignorant cobbler named Antoine Simon, an ardent revolutionist, who was supposed to be his "tutor," with the special object of instilling into him the democratic ideas of the Revolution; but all that Simon taught him was to sing indecent songs and to talk the language of the soldiery and the mob. After his mother and his aunt had been taken away, the boy had considerable liberty in the little walled garden and lawn around the Temple, and many people, including the Commissioners of the Commune, officers of the guard, and servants, saw him daily.

Thousands of the nobility and aristocracy of France had been executed, and greater numbers of them had fled to other countries. Of course, all these were in favor of the monarchy; and there were numerous folk still left in France who, though they dared not speak their thoughts openly, were secretly monarchists, and plotted whenever possible in conjunction with the exiled aristocrats in Germany, England, and elsewhere to restore the crown with the aid of other Euro-

pean countries, most of whom refused to recognize the revolutionary government—if it could be called a government, when groups of bloodthirsty schemers succeeded one another every few months and always beheaded all the members of the preceding régime. Naturally, one of the things which the monarchists desired most was to get the Crown Prince—the King, as they now recognized him—out of prison and on foreign soil, where he would be safe.

ON JANUARY 19, 1794, Simon suddenly ceased to be the Dauphin's guardian and left the Temple that night with his wife. From that moment the mystery begins. The boy thereafter was kept in close seclusion in a single room, and never again went outside of it. The Prince had been known as a gay and frolicsome youngster; the boy was now said to be dull and silent. No one except the person who attended to his needs knew anything of his daily life. He was cut off from the world in what was practically solitary confinement. Although his sister was kept on another floor of the tower of the Temple, she was not permitted to see the boy, and they never met again.

Six months passed. The Commune fell from power and was succeeded by another bloody group, who beheaded, among others, Simon the cobbler. Barras, one of the faction then in power, as well as a deputy named Harmand, visited the prison and saw the boy, who appeared to be ill and stupid, supposedly from close confinement. According to Etienne Lasne, his last guardian, he was an imbecile or very nearly so. On June 8, 1795, he died. An autopsy was performed, and the two commissioners of the *Section du Temple*, as well as the entire military staff of the Temple, were brought in to identify the body. They all declared it to be "the son of Capet"—that being the family name of the Kings of France, and all reference to royalty now being forbidden. No one outside these so-called witnesses was permitted to see the body; and on June 12, in the dead of night, the coffin was carried to the Cemetery of Ste. Marguerite and buried.

ALTHOUGH the child had been buried as the son of Louis XVI, rumors persisted that he was not the real Dauphin. Perhaps no other event in modern history has gathered about it such a cloud of mystery and contradictory testimony. For many years it was asserted that the monarchists had succeeded in smuggling the Dauphin out of the Temple, leaving another boy in his place. The false Dauphin—a diseased boy who resembled the real Prince in appearance—was said to have been smuggled into the Temple in a large papier-maché rocking horse which it was supposed some kindly persons had sent for the Prince's entertainment. Of course some of the guards had to be bribed. The real Dauphin was then taken out in a clothes basket or in some other manner. Conservative historians of late years have ridiculed these stories and insisted that it was the real Dauphin who died in prison. But two careful French investigators who toiled for years at digging up evidence have proven that some of the earlier stories were not so far wrong, after all. M. Joseph Turquan published his findings in 1907 and M. Lenotre in 1924.

These two agree on one point: that on the night of January 19, 1794, when Simon the cobbler and his wife left the Temple, *the real Dauphin also disappeared from it forever!*

Turquan and Lenotre, however, arrive at different conclusions as to

what became of the Dauphin. Here are a few of the preliminary facts upon which they agree:

AT THE time that Simon was in charge of the Dauphin, Herbert and Chaumette were two of the leading revolutionists in power. It seems evident that preparations for the Dauphin's disappearance were made in advance by the revolutionists. On January 2 the Commune passed a decree forbidding officials to hold several offices at once. Simon, that good patriot, who held two small jobs, thereupon became uneasy in his conscience and offered to give up his position as the Prince's "tutor." This is said to have been all prearranged to bring about a change in the method of taking care of the boy. The Commune accepted Simon's resignation, commending his patriotism, and on January 16 decided that a committee of the officials of the Commune ought to have charge of the Prince. On January 19, at night, Simon and his wife left the Temple, taking their household effects with them. The fact that so many of the transactions of the Revolution were accomplished at night carries out the Scriptural remark about men who prefer darkness rather than daylight, "because their deeds are evil."

From the night of Simon's departure the boy remained locked in a single room until his death, nearly seventeen months later. Within three months from the time that Simon left the prison, the faction of Hebert and Chaumette had fallen from power, and they, together with Simon, were executed. With them probably perished the secret of the Temple.

AS MONTHS went by, rumors began to filter out that the Dauphin was ill from his close confinement. In February, 1795, it was announced in the Committee of Public Safety that "the prisoner's life is in danger"; that the boy's joints, especially the knees, were badly swollen, that he was dull and languid and always wanted to sit or lie down. The Committee finally sent one of its members, H. Harmand, Deputy for the Meuse, to the Temple to see the Prince.

When Harmand entered the tiny room the boy was seated at a small table with some cards before him, with which he was languidly trying to build houses. He paid little attention to the visitor. When Harmand spoke to him the boy only stared at him listlessly and made no reply. Harmand, who was a kindly man, strove to question him, but without result. He asked if there was anything that could be done to make him more comfortable. There was no answer. Did he want any toys or delicacies? Anything to read? To all these and other questions the supposed Dauphin made no reply. He did not speak a word during Harmand's visit—merely stared indifferently at him or at the wall. Harmand reproached him for his stubbornness.

"I am here for your good, my child," said he. "I am trying to benefit you. You are injuring yourself by this attitude."

Still not a word of reply.

Finally Harmand said: "Give me your hand."

To this the boy responded by stretching forth his wasted arm. Harmand took it, and afterward reported: "I passed my hand along his arm toward the armpit. I felt one tumor on the wrist and another on the elbow." By "tumor," as it appears from other testimony, he meant scrofulous sores. He found similar sores both above and below the kneecap. He told the boy to

rise and walk to the end of the room and back. "When standing up," says Harmand, "he looked not only as if deformed, but as if suffering from rickets. His legs and arms were thin, his bust short, he was chicken-breasted, his shoulders high and narrow." Strange that the healthy, well-formed little Prince could have changed so suddenly in physique in only a few months!

When Harmand directed the boy a second time to rise and walk across the room, he would not budge. About this time his dinner was brought in—a bowl of thin, nondescript-looking soup with a few beans floating in it, a repulsive-looking hunk of boiled beef, and a piece of stale, dark bread. The prisoner ate some of it without enthusiasm. Harmand reproached the jailers because of the food, and directed that some fresh grapes be brought. The boy ate them, still without displaying any feeling.

It was evident that Harmand, at the time of his visit, thought that the prisoner was the real Dauphin. He had probably never had a close look at the Dauphin before his imprisonment, and so could not be conscious of the great changes in his appearance. Harmand interpreted the boy's general demeanor as one of hopelessness and indifference. To him, as he wrote, the boy's stare seemed to say: "What does it matter to me? Dispatch your victim!"

BUT during these months Barras, one of the revolutionary leaders then in power, also visited the Temple to satisfy himself as to the prisoner's condition. His interview at once convinced him that the child in the cell was not the Dauphin, but a substitute. Fearing that the truth, if made public, might have a disastrous effect, he kept silent, like the plotters who had made the exchange. In the years following the Revolution a story grew up that there had been not one substitution, but two: that a dumb child had been put in the Dauphin's place early in 1794, and that between February 5 and March 3, 1795, this dumb child had been replaced by another wasted with disease. This story has been laughed at by historians for decades; but authentic evidence unearthed in recent years by M. Lenotre and other reputable men show it to be true. The first substitution was made by the revolutionists themselves on the night that Simon left the Temple; the second was made a few months later, after the Communistic committee had turned the care of the boy over to a hired jailer again. This time it was loyalist plotters who bribed the jailer, abducted the boy whom they supposed to be the actual son of Louis XVI, and replaced him with a diseased child who eventually died in the Temple and was buried as the Prince.

IN MAY, 1795, the prisoner's condition being serious, the revolutionary government called in the celebrated physician Desault to attend him. It was rumored afterward that Desault's kindness to the boy melted him and that he talked to the physician; but this might be accounted for by the theory that it was the first, the dumb substitute, whom Harmand saw, while the second, though diseased, was not dumb.

Here another bit of dark mystery enters. Desault had been attending the boy only a few days when, on June 1, the physician suddenly died. It was rumored that he had been poisoned. Strange reports arose some time after his death. It was said that he had been unable to recognize the Dauphin in the stupid, sickly child he saw in the prison;

that when he first saw the boy he exclaimed with an oath: "The child has been abducted!" It was whispered that when Desault made his report he was invited to dine with some of the government officials; that soon after his return home he was suddenly taken ill and quickly died. After his death, neither his family nor his friends could find any memoranda of his visits to the prisoner. It was suspected that he had been poisoned for fear he might tell tales. None of this matter can now be proven, save the fact that Desault died suddenly on the first of June.

The imprisoned boy died a week later. The doctor who succeeded Desault called in other physicians for an autopsy, and their verdict was that the Dauphin had died "of an hereditary disease" which they further identified as scrofula. But Lenotre and others have pointed out that the Dauphin did not suffer from any such trouble before entering the prison, and could not have contracted any hereditary ailment after entering it.

NOW, what became of the real Dauphin? Turquan believes the story of General the Comte d'Andigne, a highly respected nobleman of the Revolutionary period and father of the Marquis d'Andigne, who was a Senator of France and a General in the Franco-Prussian War. General d'Andigne, for some political offense against Bonaparte, was confined in the Temple for a short time in the year 1801. In his memoirs he told how he and some of the other prisoners asked permission of the warden to make some little gardens for themselves in the yard around the building. The warden, M. Fauconnier, consented, and the men began preparing their soil. In looking for some rich earth, one of them dug in the bed of the old moat which surrounded the building, and there uncovered the skeleton of a child, apparently about ten years old. The body had been buried in quicklime, to make it disintegrate rapidly. This had soon eaten up the flesh, but the bones were perfectly preserved, and General d'Andigne estimated that they could not have been in the ground more than six or seven years. He says he at once exclaimed to Fauconnier, the warden: "Sir, that must be the body of Monseigneur the Dauphin." To which Fauconnier, exhibiting considerable signs of embarrassment, only replied: "Yes, sir."

Fauconnier had not been warden at the Temple during the days of the Terror, but d'Andigne believed that he knew some of its secrets. D'Andigne quotes a story told by Senar, secretary of the Committee of Public Safety, who says that while Simon was guardian of the Dauphin he was a bit uncertain as to what was expected of him, and that on one occasion he asked his masters, Chaumette and Hebert, what was to be done with the Prince. They would not answer him directly, Chaumette only remarking: "Get rid of him." This, if true, could mean little else than murder. But one cannot swear that the story is true.

The Dauphin's sister, Marie Thérèse, in the narrative which she afterward wrote of her stay in the Temple (she later married the Duc d'Angouleme and lived to the age of seventy-three), says: "On January 19 we heard a loud noise in my brother's room, which made us conjecture that he was leaving the Temple; and we were convinced of this when, on peeping through our shutters, we saw a number of parcels being taken away." Re-

member, this was at night, and General d'Andigne believes that one of those parcels, supposed to contain some of Simon's household goods, in reality held the body of the Dauphin, who had just been strangled in his room by Simon. The General conjectures that a shallow hole had already been dug just around the corner of the building in the bed of the old moat, and that the parcel was dropped therein and hastily covered. Meanwhile, the other boy had been smuggled in, and was locked in the room from which he—or perhaps the boy whom the royalists may have substituted for him—never emerged alive.

D'ANDIGNE therefore believed that the Prince had been slain by Simon because Hebert and Chaumette wanted to be rid of him. But Lenotre has an entirely different theory—namely, that at Chaumette's orders Simon helped to smuggle another boy into the Temple, drugged the real Dauphin, and carried him out alive, to hide him somewhere as a pawn for Chaumette to use when he saw fit. It seems evident that at heart some of the chief actors in the Revolution did not believe that a republic could be made to survive; they were convinced, as Lenotre puts it, "without daring to proclaim it publicly, that a return to the constitutional royalty in the person of the son of Louis XVI," was the saving issue, and the only possible solution of the turmoil. Therefore, the man or the faction who had charge of the little King would be in a position to dictate terms to the others. None would see this any more clearly than the crafty, insincere Chaumette. With the aid of his tool, Simon, he got the Dauphin under his control, says Lenotre, and it must be supposed that he intended to reap the full benefit of the advantage he held. There is no direct proof that Chaumette engineered the Dauphin's escape or abduction, but circumstantial evidence is strong enough to warrant that belief.

But, alas, for human plans! Within three months the faction of Chaumette had fallen from power, and he, with all his confrères, including Simon, was sent to the guillotine. Doubtless Chaumette and Simon, grinning derisively at the joke they were playing upon their successors and upon France, went to death with the secret of the Dauphin's hiding-place locked in their breasts. Was he, asks Lenotre, "hidden in some populous slum or in the depths of a distant province, among rough and ignorant people, incapable of understanding his needs and complaints"? And yet there is some remarkable testimony to show that the royalists found the Prince and took him out of the country. We will come to that later.

MAXIMILIAN ROBESPIERRE was the head of the faction which seized the government in the spring of 1794, and he quickly became perhaps the most commanding figure of the whole Revolution. He too had dreamed of getting possession of the little King, the winning trump in the game of politics which all the Revolutionary schemers were playing. There is proof that soon after he seized the reins—that is, about the end of May, 1794—he actually caused the boy prisoner to be taken secretly to the Château of Meudon in the outskirts of Paris, which Robespierre had taken over for purposes of his own. But the supposed Dauphin was almost immediately taken back and reimprisoned in the Temple. Why? Because as soon as Robespierre ex-

amined the boy, he discovered that he was not the little King—that some one else had "taken the trick" before him. And so Robespierre became a party to the secret that the Republic had lost the hostage on which its leaders had secretly founded the hope of making a bargain with its loyalist enemies.

Some of this, it is true, is founded on circumstantial evidence, but very convincing evidence; and it also explains a curious change which took place in Robespierre's attitude at this time. From the early days of June there seemed something amiss with him. He left the Committee of Public Safety, resigned completely his part in dictatorial authority, and abandoned the exercise of government to his colleagues. Historians have always been puzzled by this change in Robespierre. But Lenotre explains it by saying that from the day that he found himself deprived of the royal child, the secret object of his policy, he felt that there was little hope for the future.

THE mist of uncertainty which surrounded the fate of the little Prince, the persistent rumors that the boy buried in the Cemetery of Ste. Marguerite on that June night in 1795 was not the Dauphin at all, caused several pretenders to arise in Europe. The first impersonator of the Prince appeared in one of the French provinces in 1799. He asserted that he had been carried away from tne Temple in a basket of soiled linen; and his story, plausible enough, soon secured for him a number of followers. He was at first ignored by the authorities, but was finally arrested and proved to be the son of one Hervagault, a tailor. The young impostor boldly insisted that he was the real Prince, and that the boy who died in the Temple was Hervagault's son, who had been put in his place. But the facts were against him. He was put in prison, where he died in 1812.

No less than six other claimants to the honor received serious attention at various times during the fifty years that followed the disappearance of the little King. Among them was one Naundorf, who appeared in Berlin in 1810, and who wrote a long account of his alleged experience. He asserted that when he was supposed to have died in the Temple, a lay figure was smuggled in by friends put in his bed, and exhibited to witnesses as the dead Dauphin. Meanwhile, he said, he had been hidden in a lumber room on an upper floor. But when the night of the funeral came, he himself was put into the coffin, which had a false bottom; and while the procession was under way, he dropped out of the coffin into the bottom of the hearse, while his friends put some bundles of waste paper into the coffin to give it weight. This story would have been ridiculous enough had there not been plenty of witnesses to prove that the coffin was not carried to the cemetery in a hearse, but by four men, walking. Nevertheless, Naundorf gained a considerable number of supporters.

Henry Seton Merriman in his novel, "The Last Hope," tells of a supposed Dauphin in England in whom a large party of followers firmly believed. He went by the English name of Barebone, which was supposed to be merely the name Bourbon slightly changed—Bourbon being the name by which the French royal family was generally known.

As against these claims there was another story often told in those days: that the Dauphin had been stolen by his loyalist friends, hidden for a while on an island a few

miles out on the Bay of Biscay, and eventually started on a ship for America; but that the ship had been attacked by a Revolutionary frigate, which recaptured the Dauphin and put him into another prison, where he died, raving mad.

THE persistence of the stories that he started for or actually arrived in America is significant. The most remarkable and most plausible claimant (though he never pushed his claim) to the honor of being the lost Prince was a man who lived uprightly for many decades in America. There is so much circumstantial evidence in favor of his being the true heir to the French throne that we can only defy any one to prove that he was not the Dauphin.

This man was known as Eleazar Williams, and he spent his adult life as a missionary to the Indians. All through his career it was whispered of him that there was something remarkable about him—that he was not an American, but a descendant of European nobility or royalty. Some even connected him with the French Dauphin; but little public attention was paid to these rumors until a remarkable incident in 1841, when Williams was more than fifty years old, set American investigators to work. One of these was the Reverend John H. Hanson, whose book is perhaps the most complete treatise on the subject. Hanson went to great trouble to secure testimony and affidavits as to happenings in Williams' past. These are some of the things he found:

IN 1704 occurred the sack and massacre by French and Indians of the English settlement at Deerfield, Massachusetts. The village clergyman, the Reverend John Williams, escaped alive, but the members of his family were mostly killed or taken prisoner. He found that his eldest daughter, Eunice, had been carried off by the Indians, and spent years in trying to find her. At last he traced her to an Indian village in Canada. She was a child when carried away; now she was a grown woman, and from having lived with the Indians so long had been completely weaned away from civilization. She spoke the Indian tongue, lived the Indian life, had forgotten her father and family, and knew and cared nothing about white people's ways. Mr. Williams endeavored to arrange to take her back to Massachusetts with him, but the French, who were then in control in Canada, would not permit it.

Williams went back to New England, heartbroken, and Eunice presently married an Indian named Turoges. She had three children—a son and two daughters. One of the daughters, Mary, married a white man—a Doctor Williams, an Englishman. Thus the ancestral name came back into the family again. Thomas Williams, the son of Doctor Williams and Mary, though only a quarter-breed, elected to live with the Indians. He settled near Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain and fought on the side of the British and Iroquois against the Americans in the Revolution.

NOW to pick up another strand. In 1795 there came to Albany, New York, a French couple calling themselves Monsieur and Madame de Jardin or de Jourdan—old citizens fifty years later were divided as to the proper method of spelling the name. It was evident to those who saw them that the two were not husband and wife, but that the man was merely a servant. The woman admitted that she had been

a lady-in-waiting to Queen Marie Antoinette. The couple had two children with them—a girl named Louise and a boy, younger than the girl and appearing to be about ten years old, whom they called Louis. The boy was a golden-haired child, handsome, bright, and attractive, and his supposed father and mother were very careful as to his safety. The couple would not speak of the horrors of the Revolution, but it was remembered that on two or three occasions the lady sat down at a piano and tried to sing French songs, but her emotions always overcame her. These people frequently received letters and money from France. After a few months they suddenly left Albany, and no one in later years could say what became of them.

Shortly after this, late in 1795, two strange Frenchmen, one of whom was a Catholic priest, appeared at Ticonderoga, having with them a boy whose description fits that of the boy at Albany. After a few days' mysterious going to and fro, the strangers made a deal with Thomas Williams, then a chief of a small Iroquois tribe, to take the boy into his family and declare him to be his son. Williams did so, and, being an English-speaking, supposedly Christian Indian, gave the youngster the name of Eleazar, though he was more commonly known among the Indians as Labau or Lazare.

All this was sworn to, years later, by John Skenondogh O'Brien, son of an Irish father and an Indian mother, who was then living at Ticonderoga. O'Brien lived at Philadelphia in later years and was considered an honorable and truthful man. Thomas Williams had eight children of his own; and as they were more than half Indian, all were swarthy in complexion, with black eyes and black hair; while the supposed ninth child, little Eleazar, had unmistakable Caucasian features and light hair.

A FEW years passed. It was now nearly a century since the slaughter at Deerfield. Reverend John Williams was long since dead; but one of his descendants, Nathaniel Ely, knowing how the old man had grieved over his lost child, Eunice, decided to take two of Eunice's descendants, Thomas Williams' children—provided Williams would consent—and give them an education. After seeing Williams' children, he desired that the blond boy, Eleazar, be one of the two.

There had always been an atmosphere of something unusual about "Lazare." It was said that while he was still a boy, two mysterious strangers who spoke French appeared near Williams' home one day where the child was at play, fondled him, embraced him, and wept over him. Williams was said to make periodical trips to Albany, where he received money from France for the support of the child. He hesitated to let the boy go, but finally gave his consent, and one of his own children, a boy named John, went also.

Eleazar took to learning readily, and went through the academy and college with honor, while John could do little with the white man's books, was finally given up as a bad job, and went back to Indian life. Ely more than once told others that Eleazar was not an Indian; that there was some great secret in connection with him which could not be told.

After he had completed his academic education, no one would have suspected that Eleazar Williams had ever lived with Indians or was supposed to have Indian blood in him.

He had decided while in college to devote his life to the ministry, and upon being ordained he became a missionary to the Indians. Doctor Timothy Dwight, the great president of Yale, was one who knew him in those days and testified to his fine character.

WILLIAMS preached to the Indians of the East for a while, then went to Wisconsin and had his headquarters at Green Bay. While he was there a French nobleman, the Prince de Joinville, a survivor of the Revolutionary period, visited the United States in 1841. He confined his visits to the cities and more populous parts, with the exception of one unexplained side trip which he made through Lakes Huron and Michigan to Wisconsin. As the boat went up Lake Huron he spoke to the captain and others of Mr. Williams, the missionary to the Indians, of whom he had heard so much, and expressed a desire to meet him. It so happened that Williams boarded the boat at Mackinac, going home to Green Bay. Presently the captain came to him and said that the Prince de Joinville would be glad to receive him in his cabin. The interview was strictly private, and we have only Williams' word for what took place. He declared that the Prince said to him: "You are the son of a King," and then related the details of his coming to America. He showed Williams a document in which Louis Philippe, then King of France, acknowledged that Williams was Louis XVII; and he offered in behalf of the nobility of France to put Williams in his rightful place on the throne. But Williams, saturated with religious fervor and with a sense of the importance of his work among the Indians, refused the offer with slight hesitation.

Some time after this the Reverend Mr. Hanson wrote an account of the episode as he had it from Williams' own lips and sent it to *Putnam's Magazine*. When the magazine was published Hanson cut out the article and sent it to the Prince de Joinville, then in France, asking him if he acknowledged it to be true. After some delay a reply came from the Prince's secretary, denying the interview altogether. The letter admitted that the Prince had "had a chance meeting with Mr. Williams," but said that nothing unusual had been discussed. In this remark, says Mr. Hanson, the Prince overplayed his hand. There was plenty of testimony to the fact that he had asked a number of questions of the boat captain and others about Williams and expressed a hope that he might meet him: that he had shown agitation when he first saw Williams at Mackinac; and that he had asked for and obtained a private interview with the missionary. That he denied the interview afterward was doubtless due to his failure to induce Williams again to take up his kingly rôle.

Another curious coincidence follows. At Hanson's suggestion, a reputable physician examined Williams in 1853. He found scars resulting from old sores on both knees, particularly the right, on both elbows and both wrists. He said the sores had occurred in childhood and were not scrofulous, but might have resulted from improper food and other causes. This Hanson took to mean that the diseased child whom Harmand saw in the Temple was not a substitute, and that when the monarchists stole him shortly afterward they got the real Dauphin.

IT was recalled that at a party given in the home of Doctor Ho-

sack, a prominent citizen, in New York in 1818, Edmond Charles Genet, who had been the first French ambassador to the United States, remarked: "Gentlemen, the Dauphin of France is not dead, but was brought to America, and is now, I think, somewhere in western New York." A number of prominent Frenchmen who saw Williams in America remarked upon his resemblance to the French royal family. One is said to have remarked: "If he is not a Bourbon, then I never saw one."

Williams was not a man who would have made such a claim from vanity or a desire for publicity. He was quiet, modest, not self-seeking, a typically humble, earnest clergyman of the period. Although he was mentally fitted to fill a higher station in life, he continued his ministry to the Indians until his death in 1858. During his life he wrote several books, dealing mostly with Indian subjects.

One might ask: If the Dauphin did not die in the Temple, whose skeleton was it that was found in the moat? Ah, who can tell? Myriads of persons, old and young, vanished from the earth in those troublous times; and the soil of an old city like Paris holds many a secret which will not be revealed until the Judgment Day.

# Werewolves

ONE of the most familiar superstitions of all times is the belief that certain people have the power of turning themselves at will into wolves and back again. Along with this belief there is the idea that if the person is injured while in his wolf form, he will be injured in the same place when he turns back into a human being. A good example of this belief is a story in the "Banquet of Trimalchio." Niceros and a soldier friend of his started out to call on a widow in a nearby town. Their walk took them along a road lined on each side by the tombstones and monuments of the dead. At this point the soldier suggested that they stop to rest, as he was tired. Niceros agreed, but what was his horror to see the soldier retire behind one of the monuments and strip off his clothes, leaving them in a pile on the ground. The naked man then muttered unintelligible words and was straightway turned into a large wolf, which ran off into the forest.

The terrified Niceros rushed on to the home of the woman friend he was on his way to see. When he entered the yard she said: "Why didn't you come a little bit earlier? A big wolf just rushed into my yard, killing the chickens right and left, but he did not escape quite free, for my manservant threw a knife and gashed him in the neck."

Niceros, more astounded than ever, hurried back to his home, and there he found the soldier in bed, the covers gory from a deep wound in his neck!

*To secure the pay-roll was an easy matter for Slick.*

# Fuel

By CARLYSLE GRAHAM RAHT

***Through a winding, frozen, tortuous path Slick, a past-master at his art, brings his perfect crime to its perfect culmination.***

IT WAS accounted a perfect crime by the officials of the Chadabusco mine, for they never again beheld the stolen pay-roll, nor discovered a clue to the robber, although later the car he used to make his getaway was found.

Fortuitous conditions governed the occurrences of that December night. Slick Pelkins felt positively virtuous. In the first place, the mine was fabulously rich—the pay-roll of one hundred thousand dollars amounted to less than a week's output of ore. The mine was owned by a New York philanthropist whose income ran into the millions, and whose yearly donations to charity totaled ten times the value of the stolen pay-roll. The New Yorker could well afford to donate the amount to a worthy cause—and to Slick's way of thinking his cause was worthy. If he were a cold, unscrupulous business man, who robbed widows and orphans in order to give to other widows and orphans, he would feel differently. Slick was thinking of his old woman, who was a widow, and of Sadie, who was an orphan. Sadie was a peach, and she worked at the cigar-stand in the Blitz. Both were awaiting his home-coming—the oft-spoken-of day when he would sell

his extensive oil-lease holdings at a fat profit. Trust Slick, the cautious crook, to alibi sudden prosperity!

SLICK had few plans to make, Fate doing most of the arranging. The "super" left the mine office early, to drive forty miles across the desert to the wood-camp, where a gang of choppers were loading a score of wagons. The super had evinced uneasiness over the weather, although Slick testified he couldn't have ordered prettier. But it was no affair of his—what the super thought about the weather. His departure gave Slick the opportunity for which he had waited days, to get at the ancient safe containing the pay-roll.

Apparently, everybody knew when the money got there, and each man's interest was confined to getting his own on pay-day. They were the honestest bunch of a thousand or so people he'd ever encountered.

Slick had the choice of a dozen automobiles with which to make the drive of twenty miles to the railroad station. Allowing for delays, he calculated on pulling the job in time to catch the Limited as it paused at Chandler, on its grinding, mad rush eastward. The super probably wouldn't return until late next day, and only by the merest chance would the robbery be discovered earlier.

The Limited passed through at two A. M., and he figured that midnight would be early enough to get the money. He loafed in the company pool-hall until ten, at which time he yawned sleepily and said he was going to bed. Outside, he found the sky overcast and a slow drizzle falling, while the air was charged with an unfamiliar odor. He likened it to the smell of brimstone. The super was halfway right about the weather, after all, he admitted. But the change was in his favor—the rain would wash away the car-tracks.

WHEN he emerged from his shack to go to the office, a few minutes before twelve, the air had lost the brimstone smell — the "norther," a forerunner to the approaching blizzard, with which Slick also was unfamiliar, had passed on. The rain had turned to icy pellets, differing from any snow he had ever known. Still in his favor, he thought, and once in the luxurious warmth of a Pullman, he would soon forget the temporary discomfort.

To gain an entrance to the office, open the safe, and secure the pay-roll, were easy matters for a skilled yeggman. The bank-notes made a sizable bundle—crisp, new notes of fives, tens, and twenties—quite a large bundle. He felt the first real thrill as his fingers ran over the thin, stiff edges, making a slithering sound. He'd never before had the satisfaction of caressing a great quantity of money. There was such a lot of it, intended to be neatly folded into some hundreds of Manila envelopes, each written across with the name of a miner. He chuckled. He would have gotten one himself! Well, there was plenty more where this had come from, and he would benefit more than the fat New Yorker would suffer.

He had chosen a company car—one of a dozen—figuring that the officials, thinking it in use, would not immediately miss it. During the day he had seen to the gasoline and oil supply, the tires and repair tools. Slick was a cautious crook, even meticulous; certainly not of the brand one reads about, who overlook some minute detail.

It required but a few minutes to reach the car, climb in, and start the motor. The engine purred rhythmically. Slowly, almost noiselessly, with dimmed lights, he glided out of the camp. Once on the road, he switched on the headlights. The beams reached out into a world of swirling snow, disclosing two parallel depressions in the road, not yet filled with white—the ruts which he must follow.

THE wind was biting cold. The car was an open one, and an earlier search had revealed the curtains in tatters. Still, in facing the blizzard, the wind-shield afforded some protection. He held his speed to twenty miles an hour by watching the speedometer. Before he had traveled ten miles, the engine set up a spluttering noise, and the car began to jerk crazily—sure signs of a freezing motor. He stripped off his coat—there was nothing else to do—and spread it over the front of the radiator. The engine responded immediately, and he hit the old pace. He could stand the cold for an hour, anyway.

Somewhere ahead lay Chadabusco Creek, a dry-wash at most seasons of the year. He wondered whether the earlier rains had brought down a rise of water. He cleaned the wind-shield for the hundredth time and strained his eyes to pierce the curtain of pelting snow. He cautiously slowed speed. The creek could not be far away.

The road had grown dimmer as the snow filled the depressions, and with difficulty he kept in the ruts. He remembered that just before it reached the creek, there was a fork in the road, at which point he must turn to the left—a cloudburst a month before had cut away the bank where the old road ran, and a new one had been opened for travel. He must watch closely for it now, as the snow was rapidly filling the tracks.

But his precautions were too late. He had sped past the fork before he was aware of it, and the car, even as he yanked on the emergency-brake lever, skidded and slid over the steep bank, plunging into a hole of water. As the nose of the engine dipped beneath the surface, the motor died with a despairing gurgle.

Slick grabbed for the money and scrambled out of the sinking car. He was wet through and through, but he managed to keep the bundle of bank-notes above the water. The darkness was intensified by the extinction of the headlights, and he groped to the front of the car to recover the coat. It was, of course, soaking wet and double its normal weight. He wrung it out the best he could and put it on, for the wind cut into him like a knife.

HE PAUSED to consider the situation. He was barely six miles from Chandler, and had been on the road scarcely half an hour. He drew from a pocket a metal match-box, of the sort that miners usually carry, struck a light, and looked at his watch to verify the time. But it had stopped, water-logged. He made a hasty calculation: six miles, with an hour and possibly forty-five minutes to go. He could make it if he hustled.

He waded to the bank and struck out. Already his clothing was growing stiff with ice. He whipped his arms to keep up the circulation of blood. But, without being aware of it, he had emerged from the creek-bed on the side he had entered, and when he started away, it was to walk in the direction from whence he had come. All trace of the road

had disappeared, and he stumbled and groped along, frantically striving to keep a pace which, he felt, must shortly bring him to Chandler.

Already he was numb with cold, and his thoughts flew hither and yon in panicky disregard of reason. Ordinarily, his predicament would not have been serious; but his wet clothing—the water had seemed strangely warm compared to the icy wind of the blizzard—stiffened in the air, pricking his flesh with cruel daggers.

When man grows hungry, he thinks of food; likewise, the vision of the desert wanderer, athirst, is water. Slick thought of warmth—the warmth and glow of the pool-hall recurred distinctly, the laughing, jesting crowd, the pipe-smoke curling ceilingward, the players, and the click of pool-balls—sounds that mingled in his consciousness with the howl of the blizzard winds. Warmth he must have!

The desert was a wind-swept floor of sand, devoid of all plant life. But somehow he must manage to secure enough fuel to dry his garments and to start the blood coursing through his veins again. Otherwise, he'd never win to his destination. For warmth, he must have fuel . . .

HE CANVASSED the problem with a muster of calmness as he staggered blindly along in the knee-deep snow-drifts. In the lull of his panic, he was vaguely aware that the blizzard had shifted. He puzzled over the phenomenon. He had no means of knowing it was he who had changed course, and not the blizzard. But the fuel question engrossed his attention.

In the hazy, mysterious "back yonder" lay the wood-camp, with a swarm of men, daytimes, busily hewing and hacking at rich, resinous pine trees. Somewhere between him and the forest, a dozen loaded wood-wagons had crawled that day along the desert, bound for the mining camp. He had a vision of meeting one of them, and he chuckled crazily. "I'll give you a hundred dollars for a stick of wood," he might say. Imagine the astonishment of the wood-hauler. If he offered a thousand dollars, the fellow would probably drop dead! Soft, resinous pine, which would splutter and flare with flame and warmth. One lone stick was all he needed! Fuel . . . But no! He must not squander the money as he had in the past. He hugged the precious bundle more tightly.

But fuel he must have! He taxed his brains for a solution to the crying demand of his body. The daggers, like a million swords of Damocles, pricked his flesh. How much longer could he stand the torture? By mathematical comparison, if he were so nearly all in from half an hour's exposure, what would be his condition by daylight? He'd propounded a question he dared not answer. He brushed his cheeks and lips with fingers as numbed as they. Only the resistance his hand met in making the contact told him he had performed the act. Frozen! He rubbed furiously at them. Deep down the blood responded sluggishly. He scooped up a handful of snow. It was warm and soothing against cheek and lips.

He lost count of time, lost the original motive of gaining the railroad and the Limited. He was fighting now—fighting to keep alive until daylight. . . .

But daylight was an eternity away. By one means only could he survive the dragging hours. His

reason told him so—and the deadening, heart-breaking exhaustion, dragging, dragging at his limbs like a vicious wolf that sought to bring him to earth.

NECESSITY drove him to take stock of his personal effects, in a search for something to burn. Even if he could spare it, any bit of his clothing was out of the question—it was too wet to set on fire. Aside from that, he had only a letter and a newspaper clipping, still dry in the inside pocket of the coat, despite its nose-dive into the water. He had received the letter just that day from Sadie, and it contained a message worth preserving. He was loth to destroy it. She had told him she would quit her job and join him, if he preferred to remain in the West. She had gone on to say that she thought perhaps the West was a better place for a poor man. They could build up together and save on his earnings, and some day have a home of their own, instead of living all their lives in a stuffy apartment, or maybe a tenement-house. It would have suited Slick mighty well—if he had intended to remain a poor man. But he would soon be presenting her with her own limousine—he'd prefer a snappy roadster for himself. This, of course, if the damned wolves did not drag him down. . . .

He'd planned to confront her with the letter and show her the clipping, by way of proof that he wasn't a poor man. The clipping related the sudden rise in value of certain oil leases, no names mentioned, of which he could convince Sadie and the old woman he owned a considerable block. He'd have somehow to alibi the hundred grand he meant to shower upon them!

Mighty hard to muster the courage to destroy those bits of paper! They represented value of a sort. He'd willingly give a hundred dollars to preserve them. He'd give twenty pieces of paper to preserve a two-page letter and a narrow strip of newspaper clipping. Bank-notes are just paper, if you're a mind to look at 'em in a proper light. Paper for paper. Why not? . . .

THE world was a swirling, maddening, freezing chaos, of which he was a part, body and soul—an insignificant atom, creeping through the blackness of a never-ending night. A faint glimmer of reason lighted his brain. He must keep going until daylight. He must concentrate his thoughts upon the old woman and Sadie; they were the beacons . . . guiding him to safety. . . . God, how the daggers pricked his flesh! . . . Fuel!

He was driven back to a consideration of ways and means by the insistent demand of his body. He was slowly succumbing to the irrepressible longing for sleep. He, the night-hawk! Well, it was quite a bit past bedtime, even for a night-hawk. But he had a secret—a secret which he would keep to himself, just as surely as he would the source of his sudden wealth. Neither the old woman nor Sadie would ever know it. For at last he had figured a way to preserve Sadie's letter!

Quite a simple way, too, once one got accustomed to the idea. Now, a miser—Slick laughed aloud with glee—now, any one who really hoarded every penny might not take readily to the idea. But why split hairs over trifles—a few bits of paper? After all, five-dollar bills were only paper. Blot out the printing, and they would be of less value than Sadie's letter. They

were of less value, anyway, to him. He had said he'd give a hundred dollars to save her letter; and that was precisely what he'd meant—twenty five-dollar bills—burn 'em! They'd make quite a blaze, too—pretty good fuel, at that!

HE SANK down into the snow. He was surprised at its softness and warmth, at the readiness with which his limbs gave way under him. He fished for the metal match-box with fumbling, frozen fingers, pressed the spring for the lid to fly open. The matches spilled into the snow, but that didn't matter, for he recovered them more easily than he could have got them from the box. Then he tore off the band of a package of stiff new bank-notes. He steadied his frost-bleared eyes to peer closely at each one by the match-light, before he crumpled it into a loose ball—he musn't mistake the denominations! Then he lighted the paper band to start the fire going, and slowly, one by one, fed the bank-notes to the flame that reached out for them like an eager beggar.

He crouched over the blaze with fierce intensity, drinking in the feeble warmth. Once, in the old days before he had become expert with safe-locks, he had hoboed his way from San Francisco to New York, in the dead of winter. Other hoboes had warned him of the hardships box-car passengers encountered between Blue Canyon and Truckee, in the forty or more miles of snow-sheds. Acting on their suggestions, he had supplied himself with a pocketful of candle-stubs, garnered here and there, and the Sunday edition of a 'Frisco newspaper. When the brakemen, during a seventeen-hour tie-up in the sheds, with the weather freezing cold, had peered into the box-car, instead of the half-frozen hobo they had expected to find, they had seen a tepee of newspapers, inside of which had glowed a faint light, indistinctly outlining the crouched figure of a man. In the improvised house, Slick had kept snug and warm.

With the experience in mind, he now huddled over the paper fire, his coat unbuttoned and encompassing the blaze, so that every particle of the heat went into his body. The daggers ceased their torment; a glow suffused him, and drowsiness stalked his wakefulness. . . .

Sadie and the old woman were very close to him now—the old mother who, before the dawn of his expertness, had been a scrub-woman, in order that he might learn a trade. She had never known the trade he really had learned, but the money he had sent her from time to time had enabled her to cease the back-breaking labor. He would soon be with them now. He could show Sadie the letter and the clipping. She would never suspect the sacrifice their preservation had cost him. It didn't matter much—the hundred or so dollars. . . . A little more heat, janitor! A tip? Sure thing! Another hundred . . .

Slick mouthed a sleepy chuckle as he tore open a fresh package of fives. He was no miser! Anyway, what did it matter? He must hold out until daylight. His legs seemed strangely dead—rather muscular legs, too, they were. When daylight came, he'd see to them, for then he must move on. Daylight couldn't be so long off now . . .

It was the warmth, he guessed, that gave his thoughts a queer twist. Sort o' pleasant, they were. Slick with great difficulty kept awake, and he fed the flames with the steady precision of an automa-

ton. He'd forgotten the money. In truth, it was not money to him—just paper, which made the best, the brightest blaze he'd ever cuddled over. Beat the candle-stubs by a mile. It was only a dream, his having the pay-roll—a bad dream. When he awoke in the morning, he'd be ready for work. Fine business, to have a warm bed when the blizzard raged outside. He'd work harder, too. Bad dreams were mighty helpful sometimes. No reason why he shouldn't make good on the job. He was a favorite with the super; he'd always attended to his knitting. Promotion would come — jigger-boss or something. The super had said so. But he'd not wait for it. He'd send for Sadie and the old woman right away. The super would gladly give them one of the little white houses up under the hill. Sadie could have her flowers, and the old woman, her chickens and pigs—she'd always wanted to live in the country; and maybe they could keep a cow, if feed weren't too dear. . . .

A little more fuel, janitor . . .

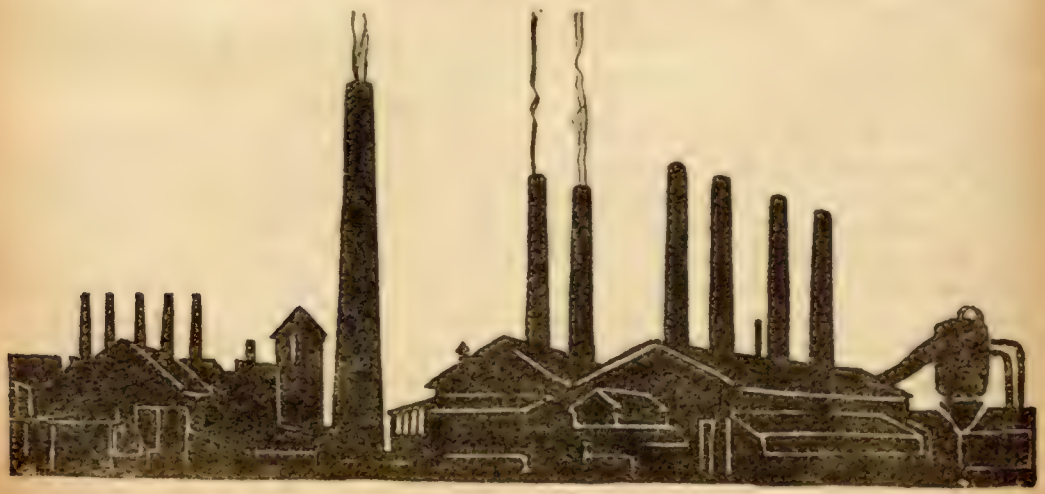
By daylight the blizzard had spent its strength. The sun rose upon a glittering, white world that lay as if exhausted from a struggle. The air was brittle with cold.

The super pushed through the flap of his tent, which he had pitched at the first signs of the approaching storm, the night before. Beyond the tent, as a barrier against the blizzard, stood the dozen loaded wood-wagons, with their teams, haltered and blanketed. He looked about with appraising eyes. In the sweeping survey, his gaze fell upon a dark object twenty steps away. He shuffled through the waist-deep snow, until he stood over the prone form. He swore softly and called to his men, who came running through the trail he had opened.

The super leaned down and recovered a bit of paper from the fingers, stiffened in death.

"Poor devil, he tried to keep warm with a paper fire," he said, pointing to the blackened remains of the bank-notes. "Handle him gently, men. He was one of my best miners."

The super glanced at the edge of paper he held. Two symbols were on it—"Love, Sadie." The ashes had not betrayed their secret.



# The Most Mysterious Happening of My Life

*Each month MYSTERY STORIES will print letters of five hundred words or less, telling of the strange experiences of our readers.*

*These experiences need not be of the occult type, but they must have a strong element of mystery, and their truthfulness must be vouched for by the authors.*

*For each letter published we will send the writer five dollars.*

*Your story should preferably be typewritten on one side of the paper.*

## A Belligerent "Spirit"

By R. H. THOMAS

SEVERAL years ago I was calling on a young married couple of my acquaintance, when the subject of conversation veered to psychic phenomena. My hostess—a charming young writer—told me she had always been able to "tip tables," and suggested that we try it then. So the two of us, together with another young woman who was present, and of whom I shall hereafter speak as Rose, joined finger-tips around a small table.

Very soon the table "tipped," showing that some "spirit" desired to communicate. But table-tipping is a laborious method of obtaining messages, so we asked if the "spirit" could speak to us just as well through the ouija board. The table promptly tipped: "Yes."

There was no ouija board in the

house, so we improvised one by means of a sheet of paper and a pencil. Instead of the usual small instrument for indicating the letters, we used an inverted glass.

After we had had interesting messages from two or three "spirits," a new one manifested itself, announced that it was "Anne," and asked about a certain somewhat frivolous relative of the hostess. Anne, it seemed, had communicated on one or two other occasions, and seemed thoroughly at home.

Neither of the young women operating the board believed in spiritualism, and neither was taking the phenomenon at all seriously. To them, it was merely something strange and amusing. So they waxed flippant in their questions and comments.

Anne told us that she had been dead for fifty years, and was in hell. Presently she grew angry at some remarks the girls made, and she called them foul and unprintable names.

The hostess lost her temper, and some harsh things were said.

"Could you strike me dead as I sit here?" she asked.

The board snapped: "Yes."

"I dare you to," cried the hostess.

The board made some vague reply about being afraid of the consequences. Then the girls asked if Anne, who was moving the tumbler about viciously, could knock it off the table. They tried to hold it there, but it whirled about the board and finally got away from them and fell on the floor—on a rug, as it happened.

The hostess' husband, who had come in and was looking on, picked up the glass and handed it to his wife. As she was about to place it on the board, and while her hand was some ten inches above the table, some unseen force struck her hand downward, bringing the glass down upon the table with a bang.

The young husband added his hand to those of the two girls, but the three of them could not keep that glass from spinning around furiously.

As an experiment, one of them drew a cross on the paper, and, strange to say, the glass hesitated before it moved over it—and then not until the girls had jeered and made taunting remarks.

I had been only an interested spectator so far, but I found the whole demonstration most unpleasant.

"Girls," I said, "don't do this. That woman is unhappy." Then acting on impulse, I leaned forward. "Anne," I said, "isn't there something we can do to help you?"

The glass sprang to "no."

Then Rose spoke. "Anne, I know you are angry with us, but you have no reason to be angry at Bob. Is there anything he can do for you?"

"Yes, Anne," I urged, "I'll help you if I can."

But the power that had been moving the glass was gone. For some ten minutes longer they tried, but could get no response. The tumbler made not the slightest movement.

Several weeks later I was present at a séance at which a professional medium was giving messages. When it came my turn, she told me there was a "spirit" there for me—a woman named Anne. Could I identify her? I could not. Not until I came away did I remember the ouija board incident of several weeks before. I have been wondering if Anne had been touched by my unexpected kindness, and had felt ashamed and sorry. Had gratitude or friendliness made her try to communicate with me? I have not attended any séances since, so I have never heard anything further from Anne.

# The Mystery Club

*A DEPARTMENT*

*If you've ever had a desire to write mystery stories—and there are few of us who haven't—this is the department for you.*
*Each month Everard Jason, the Mystery Man, presents the synopsis of an original mystery story—but he doesn't give the solution of the mystery involved. That is left up to you.*
*Here's a chance to try out your ingenuity and your plot-making ability. And if you send in one of the three answers that, in the opinion of the editors, are the best, you'll get as a prize one of the splendid new mystery books listed at the end of this department.*
*Your answer should preferably be typewritten on one side of the paper.*

EVERARD JASON, immaculate as usual, came striding into our office with a beaming countenance which advertised his belief that all was right with the world.

"What ho!" he cried. "Here is a problem to give your readers, my friend. If any of them put this murder puzzle together, they'll be near enough to becoming professional detectives to begin wearing rubber heels. Let her go!"

His enthusiasm communicated itself to us, and we read the new problem of the Mystery Club with pardonable excitement.

Here it is:

PROBLEM NUMBER THREE

## THE MYSTERY OF THE SEALED ROOM

The murder of T. Arthur Ambrose is no mystery as far as motive and murderer are concerned. Ambrose, a notorious usurer, ruined more than one good man. He was known to stand in dread of his victims' vengeance, and he had spoken fearfully of the murderous intent of a person whom he called "Ben."

But if Ben killed Ambrose, how did he contrive it? That is the mystery baffling the police of Riverfield. For Ambrose, evidently threatened by the vengeful Ben, went from his city home and shut himself up in a summer hotel upon which he had

characteristically foreclosed the mortgage.

This old-fashioned hotel, the Lakeside, was closed for the season. As it was well insured, Ambrose was too miserly to employ a caretaker. No resident of Riverfield, where he was but slightly—and unfavorably—known, saw Ambrose move into his hotel to hide.

But move in he did, and with every preparation for a long siege. On the top floor Ambrose really sealed himself in, with an alcohol stove and enough water and provisions to last a fortnight. Yet what a terrible fortnight, there alone in the shadowy room, with windows and doors locked, bolted, and nailed shut!

Then the slayer, Ben, arrived. He broke into the hotel without attempting to conceal his intrusion. He found the room where Ambrose was in hiding, and killed Ambrose, leaving hardly a trace. No bullets marked the walls, windows, or doors. The room was as tightly sealed as ever, until the police broke into it, following up the signs of forcible entry left by Ben on the ground floor.

The murdered man lay on his right side, a rifle bullet—a .22 calibre long—having torn into his throat. Besides that ugly and curious wound, there was no other sign of Ben's attack. The sealed room was stifling. Ambrose was in his shirt-sleeves. His fall had been sudden and heavy. He had apparently been pacing the room, and when hit had dropped in his tracks. A large, cheap watch on his left wrist had been shattered.

How did the murderer, Ben, get his man?

NOW it's up to you to answer that last question. The Man of Mystery will publish his answer to this problem in the February issue of MYSTERY STORIES.

Your solutions should not exceed one hundred and fifty words. They must be received not later than December 5, 1927. They should be addressed to the Mystery Club, care of MYSTERY STORIES, 55 West Forty-second Street, New York City. No manuscripts can be returned.

The three answers that in the judgment of the editors are the best and most cleverly worked out will be published in the February issue of MYSTERY STORIES. These answers do not need to be similar to that of the Man of Mystery. To each of the writers of these three answers the publishers of this magazine will send a book selected by the winner from the list of new publications given below:

THE OCTOPUS OF PARIS, by Gaston Leroux (*The Macaulay Co.*).

THE WHISPERING CHORUS, by Perley Poore Sheehan (*G. H. Watt*).

SINISTER HOUSE, by Charles G. Booth (*William Morrow & Co., Inc.*).

THE CANARY MURDER CASE, by S. S. Van Dine (*Charles Scribner's Sons*).

VENETIAN KEY, by Allen Upward (*J. B. Lippincott Co.*).

MYSTERY DE LUXE, by Rufus King (*George H. Doran Co.*).

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT, by Carolyn Wells (*George H. Doran Co.*).

THE DEVIL OF PEI-LING, by Herbert Asbury (*Macy-Massius*).

VIVANTI, by Sidney Horler (*George H. Doran Co.*).

BEADS OF SILENCE, by Lillian Bamburg (*E. P. Dutton & Co.*).

THE MAN IN THE SAND HILLS, by Anthony Marsden (*A. & C. Boni, Inc.*).

THE TECHNIQUE OF THE MYSTERY STORY, by Carolyn Wells (*The Home Correspondence School*).

# We Tell Our Readers

ARE you satisfied with MYSTERY STORIES as it now is?

We are not.

We think it is an attractive magazine, with an excellent cover and interesting contents.

But we're not satisfied with it.

We believe next month's issue will be better. And we are striving desperately to make the issue after that better still. And so on and on.

We have no intention of resting on our oars.

We are going to make MYSTERY STORIES the best magazine of its kind ever published.

That's our goal.

Intelligent letters of criticism from our readers will help us. Mind you, we don't want flattery. We want your honest opinion.

POSSIBLY you'll be glad to know something about the writers represented in this issue.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes, doesn't need any introduction. He isn't writing as much fiction as formerly—although a story by him recently appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*. There are many who disagree with him on the subject of Spiritualism, but no one doubts his sincerity.

Ellis Parker Butler is a great favorite among magazine readers. "Aside from banking," he tells us, "my amusements are fishing, gardening, and collecting postage stamps; and I have an unusually complete collection of early American humor. I'm the father of four children, including the famous Butler twins, and I own one dog and one canary, but no goldfish."

Richard Howells Watkins first came into contact with the criminal world at the age of eighteen, as a cub reporter. For a while he covered the Yorkville court, which takes in that section of Fifth Avenue in which IT TAKES A THIEF is laid. "I have had spread before me," he writes us, "the lurid and sometimes clever operations of the star bad eggs of the world."

"During the war"—this is straight from Richard Keith's own typewriter—"I was part of the well-known army. Thereafter came a long sojourn in an army hospital. Incidentally, A STRING OF BEADS had its inception there."

You'd never guess the job that James T. Nelligan, author of THE GET-AWAY, holds down. "I've followed in the steps of Ichabod Crane," he says. "At present I am one of those *rarae aves*—a teacher of Greek—at my Alma Mater."

R. A. Bankson, is a Western newspaper man. His cowboy stuff is authentic.

The author of FUEL was raised on a Texas ranch. "I sat around the campfires at night," says Carlysle Graham Raht, "and listened to the cowboys spin yarns of hairbreadth escapes, bad horses, and bad men."

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Send only $2.00 and we will immediately ship you a brand-new Electric Priscilla Sewing Machine *direct from the factory*, freight prepaid. When it arrives, use it for 10 days *in your own home*. Sew on it as much as you wish. *Subject it to every test you can think of.* If not *perfectly* satisfied, ship it back freight collect, and we will refund your $2.00 at once. But if you are convinced that the New Priscilla is the best machine you ever used, keep it and pay for it on this easy basis: $2.00 at the end of 10 days and $5.00 a month for 10 months—only $54.00 in all.

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L. C. Van Allan, of Illinois, says: "Before I accepted the ZANOL agency I was making $100 a month, but now I average more than that a week. My profit last week was $125 clear, so you can't blame me for being so enthused about the business."

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Mrs. K. R. Roof, of South Carolina, is the ZANOL Representative in her spare hours. She has found this work more pleasant and profitable than school-teaching. The very first week she cleared over $50 profit, and she has made as high as $15 in a single afternoon.

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Are you interested in a chance to make some real money quickly—$10, $15 or even $20 a day right from the start? I have a big-paying proposition now ready for your acceptance. You do not need to leave your own locality. You can make big money right in your own community. You can have your own Hudson Coach which I furnish. You can have money in the bank. You and your family can enjoy all of the luxuries of life.

### HERE'S PROOF THAT YOU CAN MAKE $100 A WEEK

Don't get the idea that my proposition calls for special training or experience. It doesn't! Mabel Travis, a nineteen-year-old girl, has made as much as $22.87 in one day. Christopher Vaughn made $125 in one week. John Scotti made $97 in his second week. Henry Albers made $160 in a week. Ralph Mosher made $160 in two weeks' spare time. R. Lile made $26.73 in one day. Eugene Ducat cleared $45 the first two days. Chas. Underhill made $22.30 his first three hours. A. V. Harman made $24.13 in one day. R. T. Moorehead made $12 in an evening. These earnings show how simple my proposition is. And you can do as well as anybody. You can start the very first day to make big money.

### CONTROL YOUR OWN BUSINESS

You don't risk a cent of capital to get started. You don't need any experience or special training. I furnish you with complete equipment.

We are the largest and most successful company of our kind in America. We have been established for nineteen years. If you read the Saturday Evening Post and other leading magazines, you have seen advertisements of ZANOL Products. We make 350 wonderful products — foods, toilet preparations, perfumes, soaps, and other household necessities. The demand for them is enormous. We have hundreds of thousands of customers in every part of the country. Last year we received millions of dollars' worth of orders through our Authorized Representatives.

### HERE'S ALL THAT YOU DO

You simply represent us to our customers in your neighborhood. That's all you do. And I help you to get every dollar's worth of business in your locality. I protect your interests so that you, and you alone, will get all of the profits.

This is the very same opportunity that enabled Albert Peters, Ky., to make $20 in three hours. Mrs. G. H. Michelsen, Neb., made $16 in a single afternoon. Del Hebert, N. Y., made $27 in ten hours. Mrs. B. L. Hodges, N. Y., averages $18 to $20 profit a day. Mrs. Clara Stiteler, Ill., made $17 in an hour. In fact, for doing this pleasant, fascinating, dignified work, our Representatives last year made nearly $2,000,000 for themselves.

### HUDSON SUPER-SIX COACH FREE

We want to help you in every way to make large profits and we offer to provide a brand-new Hudson Super-Six Coach, without any expense to you whatever. The car is given to you outright and becomes your personal, permanent property. Mail the coupon for details of our new plan.

### NO EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

Remember, all that we ask of you is to introduce yourself as the ZANOL Representative in your locality. The rest is easy. You will be astonished at the way the money will come rolling in.

You have the opportunity to duplicate such earnings as these: Thos. Chiasson, Massachusetts, $33.20 in ten hours; Ed. H. Belding, Michigan, $25.60 in one day; Edgar Morris, Ohio, $210 the first two weeks; R. E. Edgerton, South Dakota, $21.60 in a half day. Yes, earnings like these can be yours because I show you how to duplicate them. I tell you what to do, where to go, and what to say.

### MY FREE OFFER TO YOU

If you will sign and mail the coupon immediately, I will tell you how to get started quickly in this wonderful money-making business. I will give you all details. I don't want you to send me a cent. I will hold your territory open for you for a limited time awaiting your decision. I will tell you everything you'll need to know. I'll furnish complete equipment. You'll have the same opportunity that enabled M. P. Stecar, Pennsylvania, to average $18 profit a day; Frank Brown, North Dakota, to make $27 in a day; Geo. Backes, Oklahoma, to make $15 in one afternoon.

You do not have to agree to pay anything or do anything. You take no risks. This is your big chance to get ahead. I show you how to make $100 a week without working as hard as you do now. So send for full information at once. Don't wait until some one else gets in ahead of you. Don't delay until it is too late. Mail the coupon now!

THE AMERICAN PRODUCTS CO.
*Albert Mills*
*President and General Manager*

7375 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio.
(c) A. P. Co.

## MAIL THIS NOW

Albert Mills, Pres., American Products Co.,
7375 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio.

Please send at once complete information telling me how I can become a big money-making ZANOL Representative for my locality. Send all the facts without cost or obligation to me.

Name .....

Address .....

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(Please print or write plainly)

$5 For You $5

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Something unusual—
Something mysterious—
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put it down on paper
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Upon receipt by us of special coupon to the right you will be promptly furnished with complete sample outfit — prices — order books, supplies and valuable selling helps.

The Carlton Outfit is by far the most elaborate selling kit in the field, and contains hundreds of beautifully mounted, large-size swatches of the actual merchandise. No wonder Carlton Representatives meet with immediate success. . . . The book itself does the selling, while you do the order writing . . . and plenty of it!

## Act Now . . . . . via Coupon below

There is no time like "at once" when an opportunity such as this one presents itself to you. Fill in and mail the coupon — your outfit will go forward by return post — prepaid. In less than a week you will shake hands thankfully with the hand that wrote the coupon.

**DISTRICT MANAGERS:** The completeness of the Carlton Line guarantees successful district manager control — line up while desirable territories are still open for assignment. Write to-day to C. E. Mandel, President.

## Biggest Commissions

**25%** Annually the commissions plus bonuses exceed 25%. Commissions are paid to you in advance. Carlton's Superiority, Variety and Completeness of Line enable you to run this 25% up to real big money. You have unlimited earning power. Make the most of it!

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Bonuses too! Carltonians are given extra rewards with regularity paid bonuses in units up to $100.00. Your daily earnings are thereby given a real boost. Full details of the liberal Cash Bonus Plan are outlined in your sales outfit.

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## FREE: TRANSPORTATION AND FREE COLLAR

It costs us $100,000 a year to prepay order shipments.

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C. E. MANDEL, President
Carlton Mills, Inc.
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### EASY TO ORDER

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is all you pay—a few cents a day that you'll never miss—and then only if you are entirely satisfied and convinced that these values cannot be surpassed anywhere. Remember we guarantee **absolute** SATISFACTION OR YOUR MONEY BACK.

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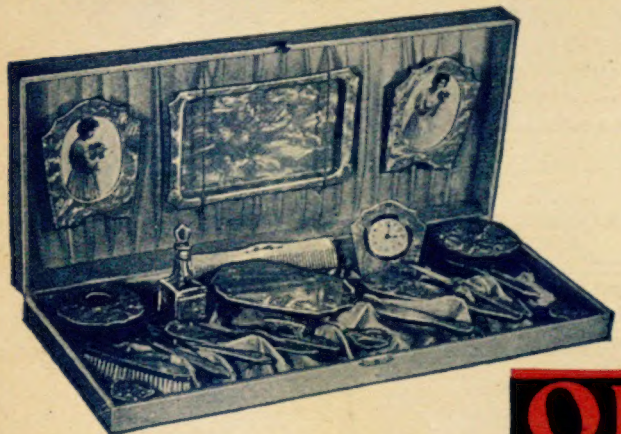

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